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"BOAT AHOY!" SOME ONE CALLED

(See page 112)

HER COLLEGE DAYS

A Story for Girls

BY

MRS. CLARKE JOHNSON

ILLUSTRATED BY IDA WAUGH



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HER COLLEGE DAYS

CHAPTER I

HUNTING A HOME

One afternoon in early autumn, as the "Limited" was pulling into Somerfield, there sat side by side in the Boston sleeper a fair, sweet-faced woman, wearing the subdued gray of half mourning, brightened by a touch of heliotrope, and a slender, graceful girl with golden-bronze hair. The train stopped at the handsome gray stone station, the mother and daughter gathered up their books and umbrellas, while the assiduous porter took possession of their bags and saw them safely across the tracks and on board the Boston & Merrimac train, waiting to bear them to Norwood.

"Ugh," said the girl, as they settled themselves in their seats; "how it rains! To think of not a drop of rain for two months, and arriving at Norwood in a steady downpour."

"Yes, it is dismal," responded her mother, "and in spite of the untold blessing this rain is bringing to thousands of people, I can't help wishing we had arrived the day before it, or the day after, and not just in the midst of it."

"What a nice way you have of putting things, mamma. Now, of course, I knew how much this rain is needed, and that it is saving millions of money and perhaps thousands of lives; but instead of wishing we had come a day earlier or a day later, I was just wickedly wishing it would stop and let us have a comfortable time hunting up a boarding place this afternoon."

"Oh! those hills!" she added, quickly, as they swept out of the city and began to follow the windings of the river northward, "that's just one thing we miss at home—the grand old hills and the clear, winding streams."

"Would you be willing to exchange St. Mark's for the New England scenery?"

"Oh no, no, no! I wouldn't exchange dear, darling St. Mark's for anything the world can give—not even for Paris or Rome, if it had to be for always. But I am glad, since I must be away from St. Mark's, that I am to have my fill of beautiful rivers and mountains."

"And elms," suggested Mrs. Darcy. "You know everybody tells us we will think we have never seen elms when we see those of the Camelot Valley."

"Oh yes, elms," sighed Lois, "the Apollo of trees! How could God make anything so beautiful as an elm?" And the rest of the ride was one series of exclamations from the enthusiastic girl, as picture after picture, each more beautiful than the other, whirled by their windows and the last part of their way with those stately twin giants, Mt. Hoaryhead and Mt. Ben, in attendance, one on either hand, Lois said was like a grand triumphal entry into Norwood.

But it was still raining hard, which was not quite the thing for a triumphal entry, it made the conquering heroes look so slinky and drabbled, Lois commented, as they made a dive for the nearest carriage. They had determined upon a line of action—to drive to a hotel for dinner and then, if the elements still showed no signs of relenting, to take a carriage, and, armed with their list of boarding-houses, go boldly forth in quest of a home. It had not been possible for them to engage a boarding place in

advance, and they knew now that it was so near the opening of college the desirable places were probably all taken. So they felt that, in spite of the unpropitious weather, they had not a moment to lose, and they had a very earnest desire to get into their rooms and get settled as quickly as possible.

That was a dreary afternoon's work. They had left home with no provision for rain except their umbrellas, and getting in and out of the carriage they soon found themselves as effectually drenched as if they had been on foot. Indeed, they found the carriage but little help, for the places were so close together on Elm Street that getting in to ride a few feet seemed a farce. But Lois said she hoped it gave them a semblance of respectability, and it certainly did help them to enter pretty houses, their skirts dripping and their shoes squashing over newly-polished floors, with an air of confidence it would have been difficult to maintain otherwise.

There were some redeeming features in the disagreeable employment. Everywhere they found busy housekeepers putting finishing touches, to be ready for the rush of girls next week; curtains going up, carpets going down,

the sound of the hammer and the broom prevailing. But everywhere the busy women, directing all the work, found time to stop and take the kindliest interest in their affairs. No one had any place for them, but every one was full of suggestions as to where they might find rooms, and disinterestedly anxious that they should secure a pleasant home.

The afternoon was fast waning. Their thin, low shoes were soaked through, and Mrs. Darcy began to fear that if they did not soon find some rooms where they could have their baggage and get into dry clothes, Lois would be sick with a cold, that would be a bad beginning for her college life.

"We will try this one more place, Lois, and if we are not successful there, we will go back to the hotel, have our trunks sent up, and try to make ourselves comfortable over Sunday."

"Oh! I can't bear the thought of that dismal hotel, mamma, and I did want to get settled today," pleaded Lois.

"Yes, I know; but it is running too great a risk. I am chilled through, and you are shivering at this moment. We will try Mrs. Waters, and if we fail, go back to the hotel."

They found good Mrs. Waters as busy as everybody else, directing plumbers and carpet men, but also, like everybody else, willing to do all she could to help.

"I have no rooms," she said, "but I think if you go across to Mrs. Harding's, you may find some. She doesn't take boarders, but if you don't mind going out of the house you can come here for your meals."

That was a new idea, but worth trying. Fortunately, Mrs. Harding had two rooms, the best they had seen yet for their purpose, large and sunny, and well furnished with closets, with a dressing-room between them.

Mrs. Harding rather demurred at the idea of having them take possession at once, but when Lois pleaded that they could not go back to the dreary hotel, she yielded, and Lois flew across the street to send the carriage for their trunks and tell Mrs. Waters she must expect them to supper. She returned to find Mrs. Harding making a fire in the open fireplace of the larger of the two rooms, the one they had already fixed upon as their sitting-room. The open fireplace had been one of the features of the room that had particularly attracted them, it was so like their old home in St. Mark's.

There was only time before supper to change their wet clothing and take their dresses from the trunks, shake them out of their folds, and hang them in the closets. And after supper, tired with their long journey and room hunting, they sat before the blazing fire and talked of St. Mark's and the dear friends they had left there, until the four years stretching before them began to look like a dreary exile from home and loved ones.

"This will never do, Lois," said Mrs. Darcy at last. "If we let ourselves think of St. Mark's too much, we will be taking the early train for home Monday morning."

"Not a bit of it," said Lois, stoutly; "I may long for St. Mark's and be a little homesick sometimes, but I am eager for Gale. Nothing could induce me to give up my college career, and I intend to make these four years tell, mamma dear. I shall be so learned and so accomplished and so 'improved,' you will be proud of your daughter when we go back to St. Mark's."

Mrs. Darcy looked fondly up at her, for Lois had risen in her earnestness and was standing before the fire. She did not say anything for

a moment, her heart was just running over with pride and happiness and thankfulness to God for giving her such a daughter. When she did speak, it was to say, as she glanced around the room :

"I think we have every reason to be grateful for being so comfortably housed this stormy night. This is better than I expected, and I foresee a very cozy, happy home for us here the next four years."

"Yes, and there are such capabilities in this room. I am glad the furniture is so nice and old-fashioned. That mahogany chest of drawers and that beautiful old table with its polished top and brass claws are darling. Let's go to bed, mamma, so Monday morning will hurry up and come and we can get to work fixing up our rooms."

All the past was behind Lois now, and she was eager for the future. The healthful sleep of youth visited her as soon as her head touched the pillow, and mingled in her dreams in a strange jumble were divans and tea tables for her room, and splendid triumphs in college—distinguishing herself in her classes, and always, as at home, a leader among the girls.

But it was long before Mrs. Darcy fell asleep, and when at last she did, her dreams only continued her waking thoughts. And they were of the dear little home in St. Mark's, and the happy hours she had spent there with the baby Lois in her arms, or the golden-haired little girl running in and out, or the fair young maiden full of eager ambitions. Baby, child, and maiden, filling the house with sunshine, and the mother's heart with love and happiness.

CHAPTER II

THE FRESHMAN FROLIC

THE next week was a happy and a busy one for Lois and her mother. By the time the day of the college opening arrived their rooms were cozy and pretty with hangings, books, rugs, and pictures from home, and dainty frilled muslin at the windows. In one corner, Lois's special corner, was the coveted divan piled high with sofa pillows, and on one end of the white fur rug in front of it stood the pretty tea table with its shining brass samovar and delicate china.

There were no examinations for Lois to take. She had entered Classical on a certificate from her school, and so was saved the dreaded ordeal. She had not realized until she saw the anxious faces of the Literaries and Scientifics how much she had escaped.

The traditional " Freshman rain " was falling in a monotonous drizzle as the girls and their friends filled to overflowing the beautiful chapel. The college bell ceased tolling, and instantly the

sweet voices of eight hundred girls, clear, ringing sopranos and rich altos, accompanied by the low rolling bass of the organ rose in the chant for the day. Then the President read the one hundred and twenty-third Psalm—stirring, inspiring, comforting words, and in the prayer that followed he seemed to know every heart bowed before him, and presented its inmost desire in his petitions.

At the close of the prayer many of the new girls raised their heads, but quickly dropped them again as they saw the old ones remained bowed. Then softly the choir and the girls chanted, "Our Father who art in heaven."

Lois's heart, made very tender by the beautiful devotional service, was thrilled with aspiration and resolve, and her mother's went out in love and longing and prayer for the young life just starting out in untried paths.

The President's address, with its kindly words of welcome to the old girls and the new, followed, and then came a thrilling moment. The first class girls were requested to remain after the chapel service, and as soon as the upper classes had filed out, the Greek Professor stepped to the front with a formidable roll of narrow white

paper. Yards upon yards of it there seemed to be as he shook it loose from the roll to begin at the inner end. Every girl knew that her fate was inscribed on those sibylline leaves and in breathless silence they awaited the utterance of the oracle. There were audible sighs of relief as some uncertain candidate heard her name, and sometimes when an anxious listener found her letter of the alphabet finished and her name not read, there was a sudden blanching of the strained face, or quick-springing tears, or even an occasional irrepressible sob. It was a trying ordeal and the Professor, kind-hearted, jolly, and beloved of his pupils, tried to relieve the nervous strain by occasional witty comments that called forth a ready laugh from at least the first part of the alphabet where the tension was relaxed. But it was over at last, and in out-of-the-way corners there were some harrowing scenes—a daughter throwing herself on her father's neck and sobbing bitterly, "I can never go home. I am disgraced, disgraced"—and the father, speechless and trembling for his child. White-faced girls with mothers almost as white, trying in vain to console them, and one irate parent from the rural districts loudly declaring

that it was all favoritism. "Gale don't want any but rich city girls. Mirandy was head of her class to hum and I guess she knows as much as most girls."

But it was a large and happy majority who began the work of the day, arranging studies for the coming term, meeting class teachers for the assigning of lessons, and making silent comments on and estimates of their classmates. Mrs. Darcy was almost as happy and busy as Lois, going about with her from one class-room to another, and helping her to decide on her electives. Lois was to take vocal music, that they had decided upon even if it involved the sacrifice of some little luxuries, for Lois's best gift was a rich, sweet voice, and she was old enough now to begin its cultivation. So together they went over to Music Hall and met the stately, golden-haired secretary of the Music school, and when Lois found herself really registered for vocal lessons under a distinguished teacher, she felt that one of the darling ambitions of her life was at last being realized. She had always sung like a bird, but an untaught bird. She had been young enough, her mother thought, to wait for the lessons, and all the time

and money there had been to spare had been put upon the piano. She was quite trembling with happiness and perhaps awe when the secretary took her down and introduced her to Frau Von Helfenstein, who sent her to the other side of the room and requested her to sing the scale for her. A rather faint and quavery scale, her mother thought, that gave but little idea of Lois's full, rich voice, but the Frau Von Helfenstein seemed to find something in it, for she ejaculated, "Gut! gut!" several times, as she had her sing it over and over.

"Ah, I will make a fine singer of your daughter, madam," she said to Mrs. Darcy as the interview closed, and it would be hard to tell whose heart swelled highest at the words, the mother's or the daughter's.

That was a very happy first day at college, and the second was even more so, for at chapel the President announced that the Association for Christian Work would give a reception to the first class in the gymnasium that evening at seven. It was Lois's introduction to the college dances, those unique entertainments peculiar to women's colleges, but finding their highest development at Gale.

It was pretty thoroughly discussed at Mrs. Waters's dinner table at noon.

"What kind of a reception will it be, Mrs. Waters? It sounds kind of poky; do you think we will enjoy going?" asked a vivacious, short-haired brunette from Chicago.

"It will be very informal," replied Mrs. Waters. "There will be a reception committee to introduce you to the old girls, and then a little dance."

"Dance! The Association for Christian Work give us a dance!" (she made it rhyme with haunts), said a calm-eyed Boston Freshman.

"Oh! yes. The girls have nick-named it 'The Christian Dance.' It is always the first event of the season, given to make the Freshmen feel at home."

"And I call that good Christian work," said Mrs. Darcy, "to help the Freshmen over the first homesickness."

"I am so glad there is to be dancing," said the Chicago brunette, Miss Arden, looking across the table at Lois for sympathy.

"So am I. May I have a two-step with you?" responded Lois, promptly.

'Oh! won't there be any men there?" ex-

claimed Miss Arden, and her blank face was greeted with peals of laughter.

"Men!" said Miss Hewitt, a Sophomore, and therefore an authority on all college matters. "Put aside the thought of men, Miss Arden, until you are a Junior. Juniors and Seniors may invite men to their dances, but nobody else."

"Then I don't see how you can have any fun," said Miss Arden, frankly.

"Wait till you have been to a few of the college dances; you will find you can have just as nice a time without men as with them."

Miss Arden looked incredulous, but Miss Doddridge, of Boston, gave her no chance to reply.

"How about dressing when there are no men; do we wear our smart frocks?"

"Not for this first one; this is perfectly informal; any light, pretty dress will do. But just wait until the Sophomores give their reception to the Freshmen; it's awfully swell. Everbody wears their smartest gowns, and if they haven't any smart enough, they have one made for the occasion."

"Do the Sophomores give us a reception, too? Oh! how lovely!" exclaimed Lois, delightedly.

"Yes; that's one of the ways we Sophomores have of rushing you Freshmen," responded Miss Hewitt, complacently. "And we think it is a far better way than cane fights and hazing."

"If only the men would learn a lesson from you, what a stride forward in the line of civilization it would be," said Mrs. Darcy.

They were just rising from the table and Lois glanced across at Miss Arden.

"You haven't given me my answer yet. Am I to have a two-step with you to-night?"

"Oh! I beg your pardon," said Miss Arden, hastily. "The idea of no men was such a shock to me I forgot all about it. Of course, I shall be most happy, Miss Darcy, since I can't have a man," with a saucy grimace.

The moon was at its full, and Mrs. Darcy and Lois thought they had not often seen anything more beautiful than winding Elm Street, so heavily arched by the beautiful trees that gave it its name that only patches and fleckings of the mellow light found their way to the sidewalk. The college buildings that by daylight had seemed a little plain and disappointing to Lois, who had expected so much, were transfigured. Their ivied walls in the soft light

might well be gray old cloisters, and as they left the street and entered the campus, shut in by the outer quadrangle of buildings, Lois uttered an exclamation of delight. College Hall, Music Hall, Art Hall, and Science Hall stood dim and dark like sentinels on the outskirts; but within the quadrangle every college house was ablaze with lights. Harvey and Horton and Washington and Wallace and Jefferson and Hamilton and Morgan, and old Dana, while high over the centre swung the silver lamp of the full moon, drenching with its shining flood, trees and grass, dim sentinel halls and sparkling houses.

They had stopped involuntarily to take in the full beauty of the picture, and now, as they went on, Lois said:

"You know, mamma, how disappointed we felt about the campus of Gale when we first saw it. It seemed such a pity the college could not have been built where it would have had more room. But I believe I am beginning to like this, there is such a classic air about it. It always reminds me of the Canterbury School in 'David Copperfield,' and 'the close' where good old Dr. Strong used to take his walks. I never

come into the campus but I feel like calling it 'the close.'"

"Now that is strange," said her mother. "I have caught myself calling it 'the close' several times. It is because it is so shut in, I suppose. It wouldn't be very difficult in this light to fancy these were cloistered walls. But see; we are away behind Mrs. Waters and the girls. We won't either of us know what to do when we get to the gymnasium."

Their party was waiting for them at the gymnasium door, and the girls seized on Lois and carried her off with them to be duly tagged, with their respective names written on a piece of white paper. And then some waiting Sophomores took them in charge, and, thanks to the tags, called them at once by name and supplied them with partners, also tagged, for the first dance.

In the meantime, Mrs. Darcy and Mrs. Waters had gone in another direction, to the galleries, where they could look down on the gay scene. It was a warm evening, and most of the girls were in their organdies and lawns and muslins. Four hundred girls moved rhythmically to the inspiring strains of "Auf Wieder-

sehen," and not a black coat among them to mar the soft blending of the flower-like hues. It was a novel and a beautiful sight, and Mrs. Darcy felt a little thrill of gratified vanity when, among so many beautiful girls beautifully dressed, none looked lovelier than Lois in her pretty gown of pale-green organdie, flowered with white carnations and trimmed with dainty green ribbons and soft lace.

For Lois it was an occasion of unqualified delight. Just to be dancing was happiness enough. Her little feet would have found it hard work to keep still, with such instant sympathy did they respond to the first strains of a waltz, or a *deux temps;* but it was not necessary to fetter them. There were partners in abundance, always provided for her by some polite and attentive Sophomore, and the floor was like glass; what more could she want?

In the mazes of a waltz, she met Miss Arden. "How are you getting on without any men?" asked Lois.

"Oh! isn't it lovely?" said the little brunette, inconsequently, her eyes shining and her cheeks glowing. But that was all she saw of Miss Arden until time to go home. The Sophomores

kept them both so thoroughly supplied with partners there was no chance for their two-step.

Lois was in the midst of a delightful dance with a partner who exactly suited her step, when they were rudely interrupted—or they thought it rude—by some one coming to tell them the lights would be out in a few minutes, and the "Freshman Frolic" was over. As they entered their pretty sitting-room, Lois was still rehearsing the delights of the evening to her mother; it had been her theme all the way home.

"I never had a better time in my life, mamma, and see, it is only just ten o'clock."

"Yes, that is one of the nice things about it. It is such a sensible way for girls to enjoy themselves—go at seven and home before ten. No late suppers, no wall-flowers, and no men; just a good time among themselves. Did you know, Lois, that you still have your tag on?"

"Oh yes! I kept it on purpose. That is for my memory book—my sole souvenir of the 'Freshman Frolic.'"

CHAPTER III

THE LITTLE RIFT

THOSE early days of college life were happy ones to Lois and her mother, and they often recalled them in darker hours as among the very happiest in their lives. Every morning Mrs. Darcy walked down to the college with Lois, "for a constitutional," she said, but really that she might have the little walk and talk with her darling through the beautiful golden September mornings; and every day Lois came back with such a budget of college gossip for the mother at home. Everything was so new and interesting to the eager girl, while her mother was interested in anything that concerned Lois even in the remotest way. Sometimes it was a new acquaintance she had made among her classmates. Or an upper-class girl had introduced herself and said she was coming to call; a courtesy which Lois especially appreciated, for she had had an idea that Juniors and Seniors, if they did not actually look down

on Freshmen, at least ignored them. Sometimes it was an invitation to a dance at one of the college houses, or some funny incident of the classroom, or a complimentary speech she had overheard about herself. Once it was an invitation to dinner with a Senior at the Hamilton House and chocolate afterward in the Senior's room, with some of the girls invited in to drink it with her. Indeed the invitations came so fast to suppers, dinners, spreads, and dances that Mrs. Darcy began to fear that the social part of college life was in danger of overshadowing the studies, but Lois assured her that it was not, and she had such confidence in her daughter's ambition and conscientiousness that she did not have any great fears.

"Well, mamma," said Lois one day, as she came into the sunny little sitting-room and laid down her pile of books, "somebody said I was a 'prod' in geometry to-day."

"A prod; what is a prod, Lois?"

Lois laughed at her mother's anxious countenance.

"Don't be alarmed, mamma dear, it isn't anything very bad. It's short for prodigy, and when they think a girl is a little smarter than

ordinary they call her a 'prod.' I don't think I am one, but I asked Miss Cutting some questions in class this morning, and the girl next to me whispered, 'My! what a prod you are! How do you think of all those things?'"

"Oh! that is it, is it? Well, I don't care how much they call you a 'prod.' That is exactly what I want you to be."

"Oh! you vain mamma! I wonder if it would turn your head completely if I should tell you of a compliment I had from my Latin professor this morning."

"Tell me, dear; I promise to try to be humble."

"You know I have told you before how likely he is to continually interrupt you when you are translating, and make you feel as if you had made such a poor recitation. This morning, luckily for me, when he called on me to recite, he was at one end of the room and his book on his desk at the other. So I plunged in and read straight through the paragraph, hardly stopping for breath, and had translated quite a long and difficult passage before he had had time to more than get his book and find the place. But he is the smartest man I ever saw, if he

does sometimes make us appear like dunces. He knows his Livy by heart, text and all, and when I finished, he said:

"'That's right, Miss Darcy, that's right, very good,' and even after he had called on some one else, he came back to me and said,

"'That was very good indeed, Miss Darcy.' Now do you think your daughter is neglecting her studies for society?"

Her mother smiled. "And do you think I am the only one in danger of having her head turned?"

"Oh! you don't really think I am vain, do you, mamma? I tell you these things because I think you like to hear them, but I wouldn't tell them to anybody else. As to the girl calling me a 'prod,' that doesn't amount to anything. I should never think of it again. I was pleased to have my professor compliment me. I admire him greatly, and I have come to the conclusion that the reason I did not quite understand his method of teaching at first was because it is more scholarly than I have been accustomed to in a preparatory school. It is rather unusual for him to be complimentary, and it only made me feel all the more anxious

to keep his good opinion if I had won it. But if you think it sounds vain in me to be repeating such a thing, I never will again."

"Oh! no, Lois; only tell me everything. Don't shut me out of your life, darling. It is just those things I love to hear, and you may be sure I know you too well to really accuse you of vanity."

"Then I shall tell you everything, shall I, mamma? You know you can't go to college with me and you don't have the girls and the classes and everything to keep you jolly, and sometimes I am afraid you are lonely here by yourself so much of the time, and perhaps you are homesick for St. Mark's, and I don't want you to be homesick, mamma dear."

Lois spoke with an intensity that startled her mother. She had taken a low seat at her feet and was looking up wistfully in her face.

"Only say you're not homesick, mamma. It makes me feel so unhappy; all the good times for me and all the loneliness for you."

"Why, Lois darling," said her mother, fondly brushing back the bright, willful little curls. "What makes you think I am homesick? I am happier here with you than I could possibly

be anywhere on earth, even St. Mark's. Only let me have a share in all your life, every nice thing and every unpleasant thing, all your successes and failures at college, and I will never feel lonely."

Lois sat silent, her eyes dropped. She was thinking, "Shall I tell her what has so stirred me up this morning?" But the answer came quickly, "No, that is impossible. It made me angry, but it might make mamma unhappy. There is no use of that. It was only those silly girls. I will forget all about it."

So she lifted her face to her mother again. "I promise you, mamma dear, anything that is the least bit worth repeating I will tell you. And now this afternoon you and I must have a nice long walk. What with the studies and the girls, I don't seem to find time any more for walks, and so my poor mamma sits alone like 'Mariana in the Moated Grange.' But this is Wednesday, and we will just go off together and have a good time. And now," leaning tenderly over her mother while she gave her a good hug, warmer, if that could be possible, than usual, "I am going to study my Greek and that will be off my mind, and we will have nothing to do but enjoy ourselves this afternoon."

Lois had gone down to college a little early that morning, and had gone into the reading-room to spend the interval until chapel in looking over her Livy. So much engaged was she with her head bent over her book, that she did not observe two girls come in and, seating themselves near her, begin a whispered conversation. Nor did she hear anything that was said until suddenly the sound of her own name attracted her notice, and then, in spite of her best efforts to fix her attention on her book, she could not help hearing most that followed.

"Did you meet her at Josie Hilton's dance?"

"Yes, an awfully pretty girl, and one of the best dancers there."

"It's a pity she is such a baby!"

"Why, what do you mean?"

"Just tied to her mother's apron strings. Her mother is here with her and will be with her the whole four years. They walk down to college together every morning, and Miss Darcy can't do a thing without asking her mother first."

"But how do you know?"

"Oh! I have seen some of it myself, and I have heard the girls talk about it. Kate New-

ton knew them in St. Mark's, and she says it must have been an awful sacrifice for her mother to have given up her home there and come here. She has so many friends there, and is head and front of everything that goes on in her circle; and here she does nothing but sit in the house all day and wait for Lois to come home. I would not let my mother make such a sacrifice for me."

"Perhaps it's her mother's doing. Perhaps she wouldn't let her go away without her. She may be one of those mothers so wrapped up in her daughter, she can't live without her."

"I shouldn't wonder. They say she is perfectly silly about her. But I think it's a great pity. A girl can't get the benefit of being away from home if she has to be hampered with a mother. Of course she can never go on the campus, and I think you lose half the advantage, and all the fun of college life if you are not on the campus. It's a regular shame. She's pretty and jolly, plays tennis well, dances beautifully, and sings like a lark. She could lead her class as easily as not, but it's just going to spoil her college career. If her mother had only known enough to stay at home and let her daughter out of leading strings!"

It was at this juncture that Lois, who had been sitting rigidly incapable of movement, the hot blood boiling within her and swelling higher and higher, until it boiled over into her flaming cheeks at hearing her precious mother so maligned, as she called it, gathered up her books, and with her head high in the air, and one superbly indignant glance at the two girls, left the room.

As for the two girls, with a startled recognition and one low, intense, grammarless exclamation, "It's her!" they cowered a few moments in abject silence, their cheeks as scarlet as Lois's.

It was the principal speaker who recovered first.

"I don't care. I hope it will do her good. I didn't suppose she could be mean enough to be an eavesdropper!"

Lois had recognized one of the speakers as a girl whom she had met at several of the dances, who had been rather oppressive in her attentions, and to whom she had not been particularly attracted. Now her whole generous soul was up in arms. "How dare they talk so of her darling mother!" She would never speak to that Miss Eastman again. Now she saw

why she had instinctively felt that there was something disagreeable and common about her.

All through chapel she tried to calm her perturbed spirit. Over and over she resolved to forget all about it; the idle words of two silly girls—they were not worth remembering. But some things they had said kept coming back to her. Was it selfish in her to let her mother give up all her friends in St. Mark's for her? And was she lonely sitting at home all day? She always met her with such a bright smile, and was so interested in all her college experiences that Lois was in danger of forgetting that the hours must be long and lonely when she was away. Then she resolved that she would not spend so much of her leisure with the girls, but devote more of it to her mother. This very afternoon fortunately was a half holiday and a beautiful day; they would go off somewhere for a ramble together, such as she knew her mother dearly loved, a regular tramp "over the hills and far away."

And that was the reason why her mother could not quite understand Lois's intense and rather unusual tenderness. She sat musing over it with little tender throbbings of the heart, while

Lois was getting her Greek. She had been a little lonely of late. Lois had been off on so many little expeditions with the girls and her mother had been so glad to have her go, realizing that the best thing in the world for her child was plenty of bright young companionship, and dreading most of all that she should selfishly make too many demands on her time, and so be a hindrance instead of a help and a comfort in her college life. Yet, nevertheless, she had been lonely. She had not owned it to herself, but she realized it now, and the thought of the afternoon's pleasure in prospect made her eyes sparkle with the pleased anticipation of a child.

A soft haze, purple against the distant hills but golden all about them, invested the day with the peculiar charm of late September in New England. As they stepped from their piazza a Pond Village car was just coming up the street. They had found it hard to decide which way to go; they wanted to make the most of their afternoon.

"Suppose we go to see the lilies," proposed Mrs. Darcy, "the frost may come any day, and then we will be too late."

"The very idea!" responded Lois. "I heard this morning that the Victoria Regia is probably in bloom. I intended to tell you and forgot all about it."

"Then, of course, we'll go there. Stop the car, Lois, quick!"

It was a short ride, on the swift electric, to the little factory village nestling among the hills. The conductor directed them how to find the lilies, and a few minutes' walk took them to the ivy-covered mill buildings with their tasteful surroundings, and the wonderful ponds enclosed in tropical foliage, and bearing on their bosoms lilies from every clime. Lotus flowers from Egypt, great, blue Australian lilies, deep red East Indian lilies, and wonderful pink and white and yellow lilies floated on strangely-shaped and colored pads about the margin of the larger pond, but left the centre entirely free for the peerless Victoria Regia. Its great, heavily-veined and spiked leaves, with abruptly turned-up margins, floated widely over the surface of the water in every stage of unfolding, and from the midst of them sprang one perfect flower. Like the leaves, it was a giant among lilies,with creamy petals fast turning to rose toward the centre.

They found the owner of the mills and the lilies standing on the margin of the pond, his gaze fixed on the queenly flower, "worshiping it," Lois said. An ardent lover of flowers and of nature, he spent all his spare time in beautifying the precincts of the factory, and cultivating rare plants with wonderful success. He was very ready to give them all the information he could about the lilies—their names and their habits, and then told them to dip their hands in the water. To their surprise it was warm, and that, he said, was the secret of his success. The steam from the mills conducted into the water gave it a tropical temperature and the exotics thrived in it. They lingered a while longer among the ponds and fern gardens, and exploring little paths that led them through bits of woodland bordering the mill-race, until it suddenly occurred to them that it was still early, and they would have time to catch the 3.10 car for Fredericsburg, a trip they had long been trying to find time for. They walked back to the little post-office, where the car started, and no car being in sight, concluded to walk to the junction, where they would meet the Fredericsburg car. They started off briskly,

but were led into many digressions after apples, rosy-cheeked and golden, from orchards on both sides of the road. It was one of the wonders of this Northern land—the wealth of the orchards—and, to Mrs. Darcy, an ardent apple-lover, they were irresistible. She filled her pockets at one wayside tree with golden apples, only to discard them at the next for more tempting, rosy-cheeked ones, and arrived at the junction, finally, with every pocket stuffed, like any small boy.

"I am not sure but I'll be ashamed to get on the car with you, mamma, you have such a suspiciously bulgy look," said Lois, saucily. "And what luck! I was certain your foraging would make us miss the car, but we are just in time; here it comes."

"Shall we sit in front, Lois, with the motorman? We can see so much better."

"By all means. We can't eat apples inside, you know, and if it is rather windy you won't mind, I suppose."

Her mother responded to her look rather than to her words.

"Lois! How can you accuse me of such duplicity? I may be fond of apples, but you

know it's the scenery I really care for. I have a great mind not to eat one of them."

"What, the views?" said Lois, demurely, as she gave her mother a helping hand into the seat behind the motor-man.

"No, heartless creature! And now not a single apple shall I eat until I am safe in the 'privacy of my own apartment' from the rude comments of an unfriendly world and a carping daughter's criticisms. And then won't you feel sorry when you see your mother famishing before your very eyes?"

"I don't seem to feel any compunctions yet. I'll wait until I see which wins. I think I would always be safe in backing the overcoming power of a red apple against any small resolutions you may make."

And so on with their childish banter, keeping it up in the very excess of delight in being on a little lark of their very own, they two and no more.

As Lois often said, that was one thing she liked about her mother, she was so congenial. She sometimes saw mothers and daughters that seemed to be afraid of each other and never had any good times together. And often she said,

"I am so glad you are not like Mrs. Smith or Mrs. Jones. I don't think I could enjoy you if you were."

In fact, their friends said Mrs. Darcy and Lois seemed to be just the same age, except you might occasionally take Lois to be the older, when she pretended to be shocked at some willful violation of the small conventionalities by her mother.

And they were just as happy as two girls could be while the electric car whirled them through the pretty village of Bracken. Past the village green, with its imposing Cosmian Hall, usurping the place of the usual village church; past the tasteful Tully Library; past the great silk mills; coasting down long inclines at a pace that Lois enjoyed thoroughly, but that made Mrs. Darcy clutch her daughter and hold her breath until they were safely on a level again; through the picturesque village of York; past more silk mills; winding along by the Mad River, now dashing dark and clear over its rocky bed, now spreading out into a broad mill-pond, with the water pouring over a high dam in quite a grand fashion; sometimes under over-hanging cliffs; sometimes through long stretches

of lovely woodland; then through another factory village more picturesque than the last, where the rollicking stream was conducted sedately through the village between stone embankments, and where twenty years before, the motor-man told them, had occurred the awful "Mad River disaster," when the mountain torrent had risen in the night and swept away all the lower part of the village, bearing down to death hundreds of lives; then leaving Hortonville through wilder and more picturesque scenery, until they reached the end of their route in the little mountain town of Fredericsburg.

They spent an hour wandering about its irregular, straggling streets, one of them taking them up the mountain side past an old graveyard, where their antiquarian researches were rewarded by many a delightful epitaph, as quaint as heart could wish; and another taking them down by the river past more factories, as inseparable from a New England village as the elms, and almost as picturesque. When they were facing home again, still in the front seat by the motor-man, the fresh wind blowing the curls all about Lois's face, and kindling the roses in her

mother's, they both agreed it had been a glorious trip and one they should often take.

Mrs. Darcy was frankly and undisguisedly eating an apple. She had begun by slipping one from her pocket to her lap, where an occasional stolen glance rested lovingly on it. And then, the temptation growing stronger with every returning look, she indulged in a surreptitious bite now and then when she thought Lois was deeply engrossed in the scenery. But being caught once in the very act, she threw away all disguise and boldly offered one to Lois and one to the friendly motor-man, who had volunteered much valuable information all along their route.

And now, in returning, they saw the reversed side of the picture, and it gave them all the effect of entirely new views. Especially in coming down the incline from Bracken, when Mt. Ben and Mt. Hoaryhead rose before them, every tree and every rock on their hoary sides brought out in strong relief by the low western sun reflected dazzlingly from the great summer hotels crowning the crest of each.

They had barely time to smooth their wind-blown hair before supper, and they came to the table with shining eyes and rosy cheeks, and

appetites not only unimpaired by the apples, but with a keenness that turned the bread and butter into ambrosia and the glass of creamy milk into nectar.

And, then such a nice talk as they had after supper before their cozy fire. It was one of the few evenings that Lois neither had to study nor was due at a dance, and they spent it in loving memories of the past, and in making many happy plans for the future.

When their heads rested at last on their respective pillows, sleep needed no wooing; their windy ride followed by their evening before the blazing fire proved a powerful and speedy soporific.

Lois's last waking thoughts were two—dreamily, "I know mamma has been very happy this afternoon; and how pretty and how young she looked, with her dancing eyes and happy laugh. I was awfully proud of her at supper."

And still more dreamily—"I wonder if I do seem babyish and tied to my mother's apron strings."

CHAPTER IV

LITTLE SISTER

Lois came home one morning brimming with delight. Her little feet fairly danced along Elm Street, and her mother knew, as soon as she caught sight of her radiant face, that something nice had happened.

"What is it, Lois?" she said when she had received the home-coming kiss that was as much of necessity to Lois as to her mother.

"You never could guess, mamma dear. You know the Sunday I took dinner with Miss Willis at the Hamilton House? Well, after dinner we sang hymns in the parlor and Miss Felton was there. She is the leader of the Glee Club, and sings and plays beautifully. It seems she noticed my singing and liked it, and she has invited me to join the Glee Club. Oh! I am so glad!"

"That is nice, darling. I am glad, too, and just a little proud."

"Oh! you mustn't be proud, mamma. I

don't believe I sing half as well as any of the others, but what fun it will be! The rehearsals and then the concerts! Just think of your daughter a concert singer!"

"But have you given your answer yet? Have you accepted?"

"Why, yes," said Lois, hesitating a little. "I thought at first I would tell her that I must consult you, and then I thought you wouldn't mind, and I had better decide it for myself. You know if it had been any of the other girls who have no mothers here, they would have had to decide it for themselves. You don't mind; do you?"

"No, not this time; but, Lois dear, as long as you have a mother that you can consult so easily, I think I always would in any matter of importance. And then you must not forget how much younger you are than most of the girls, and perhaps you really need advice more than they."

"But that's just it, mamma, I believe. Because I know I am younger I am so afraid of appearing young. I don't like to seem like a baby."

"You don't mean, dearie, do you, that you don't like to have your mamma advise you?

That you would like to be independent and act just as if you hadn't any mother here?"

Mrs. Darcy spoke with a quick little pang at her heart. Was her little birdling tiring of the mother nest and longing to stretch its wings and fly away?

Lois's quick ear of love and her half guilty consciousness detected the note of pain in her mother's speech, and she spoke hastily.

"Oh! no, no, mamma dear. Don't you suppose I realize how much better off I am than all the other girls? Of course I do, and I always like to talk things over with you first; but there is a rehearsal to-night, and I thought I had better give her my answer right away, and then I could go to the rehearsal. And I didn't think you would care."

"And I don't, Mignonette," said Mrs. Darcy, not only quickly appeased, but repentant that she should have doubted her darling for a moment. It was her baby pet name for Lois, but it had fallen into disuse of late years, and now she only used it occasionally when stirred by some quick feeling.

Lois recognized what it meant when her mother called her "Mignonette." And she

came and sat down beside her and took her hand and held it a minute before she spoke again.

"And I haven't told you all the nice things that happened to me this morning. A Junior sent word to me by Kate Newton that she wanted to come and call on me, I reminded her so much of her little sister at home. Just think of it; and a Junior! I feel 's' nice and s' proud.' Kate says she is one of the finest girls in the class, too, and that I ought to feel honored."

"That is nice. I am glad my little girl can make any one happy by reminding her of home. Perhaps she is a little homesick."

"Kate says it made her so homesick the first time she saw me one morning in chapel that she went to her room and cried."

"Poor girl!" said Mrs. Darcy, with quick sympathy; "I hope I shall see her when she calls."

"You will, of course; Kate is going to bring her this afternoon at four. And I shall bring them right up here. I want her to see what a cozy little home we have, and what a darling mother I have;" and Lois kissed the hand she held.

Four o'clock brought with it Kate Newton and Miss Baker, and Lois brought them upstairs and was visibly pleased with the evident impression the pretty room and the charming mother made upon the august Junior. But Lois and her mother were no less charmed with Miss Baker. While Lois delightedly busied herself at her little tea table making a cup of chocolate for her guests, Mrs. Darcy had a chance to have a very nice little talk with Miss Baker, and found her so mature in her manner of thinking and expressing herself, and so strong in her convictions that she felt she would make a very valuable friend for Lois, if only the acquaintance so happily begun might ripen into friendship.

They began discussing some very interesting questions after Lois's chocolate and wafers had been duly complimented and disposed of. It was a dreary day outside, a damp, chilling east wind blowing, and a gloomy sky covered with heavy dark clouds. But that only made it all the more cheery inside, with the logs blazing and crackling merrily in the fireplace. To the girls accustomed to only the steam heaters or registers it seemed very delightful, and they

were easily persuaded to lay aside their wraps and draw up cozily around the fire while the shadows deepened outside, and by the time a startled glance at the clock warned them that there was barely time to get home for supper, they had all come to feel like old friends. Kate was a frequent and a welcome visitor always, and now as Mrs. Darcy held Miss Baker's hand at parting, she told her she hoped she would come very often, with Kate or without her, and make their rooms one of her college homes.

"Oh! may I?" with a quick pressure of Mrs. Darcy's hand. "I would like to so much. You don't know how I envy Miss Darcy having her mother here with her. And I love her already, she is so like my little sister Helen."

Rehearsal was from six thirty to seven thirty. Lois came home from it greatly excited.

"It's perfectly fine, mamma; Miss Felton is the best leader you ever saw, and the girls sing splendidly, and we have the cutest songs; and we are to give a concert very soon, just a little one in Music Hall for the benefit of the college settlement in New York. There is one girl who has a magnificent voice. She sings most

of the solos. But what do you think, mamma? Miss Felton walked almost home with me, although I told her I wasn't one bit afraid; but she said she was sure you would like it better; I was so young to be out alone. How do you suppose the girls all know I am so young? You don't tell anybody, do you?"

Mrs. Darcy laughed, for Lois had actually stopped to get breath and wait for a reply to her question.

"No, indeed, darling; but you look young, of course, and it is no disgrace, my dear, and a fault that time will remedy only too soon."

"Well, I know what it is; it's my hair and my dresses. Won't you have my dresses made really long, mamma? And the very day I am seventeen I am going to put my hair up; may I?"

"If your heart is set on it, and you think it will make you any happier. But did you finish telling me what you began?"

"Oh! no! What do you think? Miss Felton said I would probably have to be singing solos soon; she was not sure but that I had the best voice in the Glee Club. Do you suppose I could ever sing a solo, mamma?"

She asked the question shyly, almost tremblingly, but she was very happy, her mother could see from her shining eyes, as she sat down to the piano and began to play and sing softly:

"Fair Gale, our praise to thee we render,
O dearest college halls!"

Two days after, Lois came home with a note. It was the first time she had ever found one for her on the bulletin board, although she had looked with hope deferred every day, and envied the girls to whom the interesting looking little notes, folded in every conceivable shape, but always with both the name and the class, were addressed. This morning she had looked mechanically, as usual, but without hope, and there, at last! was a little triangular bit of paper addressed to "Miss Lois Darcy, '9—." And when she opened it she was still more delighted. It was from Miss Baker, asking her if she might accompany her to vespers on Sunday, and it began, "Little Sister."

CHAPTER V

THE SOPHOMORE RECEPTION

It came at last—the day of the Sophomore Reception! It had almost seemed to the First and Second Class girls that it never would come, they had talked about it so much, and there had been so many rumors as to the date. But one morning in chapel it was announced for the tenth of October, and Mountain Day to follow it on the eleventh—a beneficent arrangement by which the girls worn out by the excitement and fatigue of the reception might have the next day for nature's healing and no lessons to worry about.

The dressmakers were all crowded with orders for new gowns for the great occasion, and the florists and livery stables were taxed to the utmost to supply the demand for flowers and carriages.

Lois had no new gown, but she had her graduating dress, "as good as new," she said, and nothing could have been more suitable to

her girlish beauty than the simple white organdie and lace. Kate Newton, an old St. Mark's friend and a Sophomore, wanted to take Lois to the reception, but she had made an engagement with some one else before she knew Lois would be in college. She did the next best thing; she brought her bosom friend, a tall brunette, Lois's very counterpart in style, to call one day and make an engagement for the reception. She met her several times afterward at little dances, and had begun to feel a very peculiar interest in the young lady who was to take the place of a young man as her escort. And when on the day itself a box of exquisite La France roses arrived with Miss Hilton's card and a note saying the carriage would call for her at seven, Lois said she actually had a weird feeling as if it were a young man in disguise who was paying her all these attentions.

Mrs. Darcy went again to the gymnasium gallery as spectator of the gay scene, and if she had thought the first scene a pretty one, this was enchanting. After all, dress does make a difference. The girls in their evening toilets of every exquisite fabric and delicate shade, varied by an occasional rich silk of deeper hue, their

white necks gleaming. and sometimes, too, a rounded arm when the long glove had been drawn off, made a shifting, kaleidoscopic picture hard to imagine as they moved in the rhythmic mazes of the dance.

The hall itself was beautifully decorated in the class colors, the gold of the Sophomores represented by sheaves of wheat intertwined with the crimson poppies of the Freshmen. The galleries were filled with the Faculty and the friends of the dancers, all in full dress, to grace the occasion. Only in the galleries were there any black coats, and there was quite a sprinkling of them there, many of them Houghton men who looked on at the dance beneath with longing eyes, like so many masculine peris shut out from Paradise, and nevertheless permitted to gaze upon its unattainable glories, rewarded, however, quite frequently for their patient waiting by heavenly visitants from below coming up to talk out a dance with them.

But the spectators in the gallery thought the prettiest effect in the whole scene was when something would occur at the "grind table," and the whole rainbow-tinted assembly would start on a run and mass like some huge bouquet

about the grinds, to gradually dissolve away as the excitement spent itself. As a Houghton College man standing near Mrs. Darcy said, "It's simply gorgeous. Beats all the spectacular shows I ever saw on the stage. Do you suppose they know how awfully pretty they look?"

Beautiful as it all was to Mrs. Darcy, her eyes still followed greedily one little white-robed figure with waving golden curls. If she lost sight of her for a few moments, attracted by some stately beauty in gorgeous dress, she strained her eyes until she found her again, and was not perfectly happy until she recognized the graceful swing of that dainty little figure.

She had taken furtive notice of two dignified, well-dressed women standing near her, whose comments on the girls, calling many of them by name, showed a familiar acquaintance with them. Suddenly one of them said:

"Who is that beautiful girl in white, with golden curls and a pink rose in her hair?"

Mrs. Darcy could have answered right away, but it was some time before the other could distinguish who was indicated by the description. But when she did, her quick exclamation set

every pulse to throbbing in the quiet stranger who stood near her. And did not Mrs. Darcy disdain to play the eavesdropper? No, indeed; with head discreetly turned away, she strained her ears to lose no word of the reply, boldly regardless of the awful sentence pronounced upon all listeners.

"Oh! I see whom you mean. Why, that's Miss Darcy, one of the prettiest and brightest girls in the first class. No, I don't have her myself, but I have heard her talked over by those who do. They say she is unusually bright, and one of the very youngest in her class, too. Fine in her literary work, in Greek, Latin, and mathematics, they think she is bound to make an unusual record if she keeps on as she has begun."

And then the awful doom she had so recklessly courted fell upon Mrs. Darcy. The same speaker went on: "There is just one thing that is probably going to prevent her taking the standing in her college life that she otherwise would. Her mother is here with her."

"How will that hinder her?"

"Oh! in a thousand ways. She will never be able to act independently. She will remain

just where she is now, a sweet, bright, clever little girl, but there will be no developing of the woman with an ability for leadership, such as there probably would be under other circumstances."

"But she is still very young. You wouldn't want her to grow old before her time, and a child of that age ought to have her mother with her."

"I know it. I am not finding fault with the arrangement; if it could ever work well, it seems as if it ought in this case. But strange as it may seem, it has been our almost universal experience that mothers prove a hindrance instead of a help."

"Do the day scholars, then, never rank with the out-of-town girls?"

"Oh, yes, sometimes; but the environments do not seem to be quite the same. A girl's mother who is here to be with her daughter, has no home cares and no society duties to take up her time; nothing but her child. And, unless she is a remarkably wise woman, she will unconsciously make so many demands upon her child's time and attention that it eventually comes to be a great drain upon the girl's strength, mentally and physically."

"Well, why don't you make a law prohibiting the mothers' coming, or at least discouraging it?"

"We don't own Norwood. You know we can't prevent any one who pleases from taking up a residence here. We can and do forbid their residence in the college houses, and if our advice is ever asked, which it very seldom is, we discourage their coming with their daughters, and tell them very frankly that we find the young women do better when compelled to be entirely self-reliant."

"Then Miss Darcy, I suppose, is not on the campus."

"No, and the pity of it is, she never can be, if her mother holds to her intention of remaining here the whole four years."

"That is a pity, isn't it? Girls who never go on the campus lose so much of college life."

"They lose the very cream and essence of it. If her mother only knew what she was depriving her daughter of, all the forming and educating influence of constant companionship with bright, young minds, the warm, life-long friendships formed in no other way; the invaluable habits of independent thought and action; with-

out taking into consideration the wholesome fun and good-fellowship that are like strong, bracing breezes to blow away the malaria and miasma of a too self-conscious life; I say if she is the right kind of a mother, and only knew all her daughter is going to lose these four years, when she ought to be out of leading strings and learning to walk alone, she would find a place for her daughter on the campus and pack up and go home, contenting herself with the vacations and perhaps an occasional visit."

Her companion looked at her with a little smile of amusement.

"My dear Miss Graham, you are really growing eloquent. Aren't you a little afraid some one may overhear you?"

"Dear me, was I talking so loud? I am afraid I was getting a little excited. It always seems to rub me the wrong way to see such a promising girl hampered and repressed in her development."

Miss Graham lowered her voice and glanced uneasily about her as she spoke, to see if she had been overheard; but her nearest neighbor was a little woman with averted head, evidently entirely absorbed in watching the dancers, and

she looked relieved. She could not see the face that, as she began to speak, beamed with exultant pride, change to indignant surprise, which swiftly in turn faded into a gray pallor of mute anguish.

Could she be doing her darling child an injury? Was it possible she would be happier and freer without her? What was this "campus life" that could outweigh all the sweet influences of home and mother? No, she would never believe it. She was no selfish mother to make undue demands upon her daughter's time and attention. She was only too anxious that she should have all the young companionship possible. What did those cold-hearted women know about it? They were not mothers; that was certain. Their plan might work well for turning out machine-made women, all of a pattern; but her plan was God's plan. He knew what was best for girls when He gave them mothers to love them and fondle them and watch anxiously over them. If a life of independence was the best thing for girls of sixteen, why didn't God kill off all the mothers of sixteen-year-old girls? "Life-long friendships!" Were they so much better

than mother's love that they should supplant it?

Yet all the time she was indignantly and desperately repudiating their views, she knew she had received a hurt that left her pale and weak. She would not think about it any more; she was too dazed to think; she could only feel. Everything had grown dim about her. The dancers were far off and hazy. She could not distinguish Lois in the many-tinted blur. She would hunt up Mrs. Waters and tell her she was tired and would go home, though she must not come home with her. She could take a car and ride to the door.

She succeeded in accomplishing her purpose in spite of Mrs. Waters insisting that she would go with her. She felt that even for that short ride any society would be intolerable.

She had time to rouse her dazed faculties and get herself into a presentable frame of mind before Lois's carriage rolled up to the door, and Lois herself, flushed and beautiful if a little dishevelled, appeared in the sitting-room, bearing in her arms a great sheaf of wheat and scarlet poppies, as trophies and mementos of the grand occasion.



LOIS APPEARED, FLUSHED AND BEAUTIFUL

(See page 64)

It was a cold windy night, and her mother had made her wear a long fur cloak to protect her, she was so thinly clad. Her hair, bronze, but with many a gleam of gold, lay in curly, wind-blown masses on the dark fur. The warmth of the gymnasium and the exercise of dancing had made little soft ringlets all about her face, and the roses in her cheeks exactly matched the roses in her hair, while her eyes, her great beauty, large, dark, soft, and bright, were dancing with delight.

Lois was too full of the pleasure of the evening, and too eager to give her mother a full recital of it all to notice any unusual pallor in her mother's face or restraint in her manner. Yet in spite of her efforts to shake it off, to ignore and forget all she had heard, Mrs. Darcy could not resist a fateful feeling that a strange and chilling barrier had arisen between her and her darling, to destroy the perfect unreserve of their loving familiarity.

She had said to herself over and over while waiting for Lois's return, "I will not let myself be influenced by what those women said. They cannot know what is best for Lois, my baby, my darling, my little one, as well as I, her

mother." And then in spite of herself her imagination had run away with her into a vista of dreary years, without Lois, until before she knew it, there were bitter tears falling on her tightly clasped hands. Then she had roused herself, determined to put away the ugly nightmare once and forever, and calling herself foolish, weak, and silly to be so disturbed by idle words.

Then Lois had come, and now she was entering into her account of the evening with feverish eagerness, while her eyes took in hungrily every detail of her girlish beauty. "My Lois, my beautiful darling," she was silently saying all the time, "no power on earth shall separate us."

"I met so many nice girls, mamma," Lois was saying. "And what do you think? Miss Felton and Miss Baker both came and begged me for a dance. I could not give them any; our programs were all made out for us beforehand by our escorts, and we had nothing to say about it. But Miss Felton persuaded one of my partners to give up one-half of a dance to her, and I felt honored, I assure you, a Senior and leader of the Glee Club. I was so sorry I

couldn't dance with Miss Baker; I wanted to so much, and she really looked disappointed."

Lois's tongue lagged after a while; the excitement was beginning to wear off and the fatigue to set in, but she roused herself to say:

"Would you like to hear a pretty speech Miss Felton made me?"

"Of course, dearie; I want to hear all the pretty speeches your admirers make."

"Well then, you mustn't think me vain. She said she thought I was the nicest Freshman in the hall, and she wished so much I was living in the Hamilton House, and asked me if I didn't think I would come on the campus some time. I told her I would like to very well, but they wouldn't let you come too, and you were worth more than ten thousand campuses."

Lois leaned her tired head on her mother's shoulder as she spoke, and her eyes were languidly fixed on the flickering fire, so she did not see the quick, painful quiver on her mother's lip and chin, though she did wonder drowsily why it was so long before she felt her soft kiss and heard the whispered, "My Mignonette."

CHAPTER VI

MOUNTAIN DAY

THE day of the reception had been stormy, only clearing off in the evening in time for the girls to get in and out of their carriages without getting wet—a kindness on the part of the clerk of the weather thoroughly appreciated by the Sophomores and Freshmen. The President had said at chapel in the morning while winds were howling and rain pouring, "We have never had in the history of Gale a rainy Mountain Day, and I hope to-morrow will not spoil the record."

And it did not. Mountain Day dawned clear and sparkling, every vestige of yesterday's clouds clean swept from the sky, and heaven and earth smiling in radiant sympathy with the eight hundred happy girls on their first holiday of the year.

And all Mrs. Darcy's painful doubts and misgivings had vanished with the clouds. Her mental atmosphere this morning was as serene and joyous as the sparkling blue and gold of

the October day. She wondered how she could have been so weak the night before. There could be no possible question of the happiest and best thing for Lois.

Mrs. Darcy was sitting at her window waiting for Lois to wake up. She was letting her sleep as long as she would to recover from the fatigue of the night before, and also because it was the first chance Lois had had since college opened to indulge in the luxury of a morning nap.

On Lois's little tea table drawn up in front of the fire were a plate of bread and butter with a toasting rack beside it, and the preparations for a cup of cocoa all in readiness for Lois's simple breakfast when she should be ready for it. A book lay in Mrs. Darcy's lap, but she was not reading much; the view from her window irresistibly drew her eyes outside. Just across the street were park-like grounds, and the great maples scattered over them were in the full glory of their crimson and gold. Beyond to the left she could catch glimpses of wooded heights all aflush with color, and to the right the bold outlines of Mt. Hoaryhead and Mt. Ben stood out with startling distinctness in the clear atmosphere. Everywhere there was a wealth of

color easier to associate with the glowing tropics than with cold and gray New England. Her western eyes, used to the dull brown and tawny reds of the autumn foliage at home, could never tire of the splendor of ruby and topaz in the glowing October of the north. And as she sat feasting her eyes, she pictured herself sitting at the same window with the trees all bare and brown, and then later on bending beneath their burden of snow and ice, and then, with a little anticipatory start of delight, she thought how beautiful it would be to see them budding out into the tender spring foliage—to watch them unfolding from day to day and to know that each day was bringing her and Lois nearer to their return to dear St. Mark's. The vision set her heart to beating in happy measure, and there was no gloomy shadow of a coming event to whisper that when spring came she would not be watching its unfolding from that sunny window with Lois within reach of her voice.

She glanced at the clock. Lois was sleeping late; perhaps after all she had better call her; there would be some studying to do before they set out on their afternoon expedition to the mountains. As she stepped into the next room

to wake her, she stopped a moment and gazed fondly at the pretty picture. Mrs. Darcy always said Lois posed in her sleep, and she was not belying her mother's statement. Her head turned slightly to one side, her bright hair flowing over the pillow, and one hand resting gracefully on her bosom, she did look like a carefully arranged model of graceful sleep. And when added to the pretty pose were the flushed cheeks with the dark lashes resting on them, the half smile hovering about the sweet curves of the mouth and chin, she made a picture her mother hesitated to spoil. But it was just such a picture, with endless variations in the poses, that she had to spoil every morning, so she bent over her and spoke softly, "Wake up, Lois, it's ten o'clock."

Lois opened her eyes quickly and almost before her eyes were open had thrown her arm around her mother's neck and pulled her head down for her morning kiss, a thoroughly audible one on Lois's part.

"Why did you let your lazy child sleep so long? Isabel is coming over to study her Greek with me at eleven o'clock, and I was going to have such a good long practice first for Frau Heidelberg."

Lois seldom tried to remember the troublesome German name, but used any appellation that first suggested itself, provided it was long and had a Teutonic sound.

Half an hour later she threw herself into a low chair beside her little tea table with a sigh of perfect enjoyment. Her brass samovar was steaming away with hot milk for her cocoa, and on the rack before the fire the bread was browning to a turn.

"This is luxury, isn't it, mamma? To think this is the very first time I have had a chance to wear my new breakfast gown." And Lois surveyed complacently its soft crimson folds and pretty lace trimmings. The samovar gave a vigorous little puff, and Lois lifted the lid and peeped in.

"Come, mamma, the milk is boiling; let us have our breakfast. I'll make the cocoa and you watch the toast. Oh! don't say you have had yours; it would be such fun to have it together and play we were somewhere in Europe in lodgings, you know, taking a Continental breakfast."

And she would take no refusal until Mrs. Darcy was seated opposite her pretending at least

to enjoy the crisp brown toast and steaming cocoa. Lois ate so much toast and drank so many tiny cups of cocoa, and had so much to talk about between memories of the night before and anticipation of the coming frolic in the afternoon that they were still lingering at their little table when Isabel came over for her Greek. Lois had just said: "Now I feel exactly as if I were in one of Dickens's stories with my unlimited cups of tea (cocoa, far more proper) and my rounds of buttered toast. I always did want to go to one of those snug little tea parties of his, only he never has anybody but old women at them. Some day I shall write a book and put you and me in it and our little parties, and make everybody's mouth water that reads them."

And then came Isabel's knock, and she was easily persuaded to have a cup of cocoa and a piece of hot toast. And then the girls would not let Mrs. Darcy touch the breakfast things, but, protected by motherly aprons, Lois got out the bright little dish pan, the little oil stove supplied them with plenty of hot water, Isabel was provided with a clean tea towel, and it was only a few minutes' frolic to "do the dishes."

"You do have such good times together, you and your mother!" said Isabel as they sat down to study. "It makes me just green with envy."

"Of course, we do, but she doesn't know about half our good times, does she, mamma?" with a bright, loving glance toward her mother, who was seated again by her favorite window, but this time with her sewing. A smile and a glance was all her answer, but it was all she wanted.

"All aboard for Mt. Hoaryhead!" A buckboard piled high with happy girls stood before Mrs. Waters's door ready for the start, but delayed that the girls might watch a very interesting preliminary performance. No buckboard could be found quite large enough to hold all the girls and their chaperone, and so two of them had decided to go on horseback as outriders, and Lois was one of the two. In her western home riding was her delight. She had been brought up in the saddle, but this was the first time she had ridden in Norwood. The other rider was the Boston Freshman, Miss Doddridge, a stately girl of somewhat matronly proportions, dignified and deliberate in her man-

ners, as became a daughter of "The Hub." She was older than the other girls, having made a late decision to prepare for college, and sometimes found it a little difficult to enter into their girlish sports with perfect spontaneity, while greatly desiring to do so. She had never been on a horse in her life, but it was one of the things she had always secretly longed to try, and she seized this opportunity.

Mr. Day had in his stables a small, undersized horse of the pony build, thoroughly reliable, and with a gait like a rocking-horse. He had recommended it to Miss Doddridge as the very thing for a novice, and though she rather demurred at the diminutive size of the steed in comparison with her own stately proportions, Mr. Day assured her he was perfectly able to carry her, and she was finally convinced that for a first attempt it was better to prefer safety and comfort to appearances.

The girls had put their inventive heads together to remedy her second difficulty,—the lack of a riding habit, and while the result did not quite satisfy Miss Doddridge's æsthetic sense, it was not very bad. An old black skirt of Mrs. Waters had been ingeniously lengthened

by a piece set on around the bottom and the seam disguised by rows of stitching above and below. It was weighted with shot, and a blazer, shirt waist, and Tam O'Shanter of her own completed her very respectable costume. Lois's natty little riding habit of dark blue fitted her slender figure perfectly, and gloves and hat and whip were all in regulation style and perfect taste. Miss Doddridge felt the contrast, and as one of her chief reasons for wishing to learn to ride was the admiration she always felt for a graceful equestrienne, she was half inclined to regret that she had made the attempt without being properly equipped. However, she brought her Bostonian philosophy to bear, reflecting that this was only a trial ride, she might never care for another, but if it did prove a success, she would supply herself with an equestrian outfit, and her next appearance should be eminently satisfactory.

With her foot in the groom's hand, Lois sprang lightly to her seat, but rather advised that Miss Doddridge should try the more sober method of mounting from a kitchen chair, as this was her first attempt. Miss Doddridge thought otherwise, however; she was deter-

mined to begin right, and learn all she could of the proper methods.

The groom was a slender, little fellow, but he told Miss Doddridge he would count one, two, three, and then she must spring, and he thought he would have no difficulty in putting her in the saddle. With her substantial foot resting solidly in the groom's hand, she twice made the effort, but twice failed, because her spring and the groom's toss did not seem to connect. The third time she bent all her intellect and energy to the effort with appalling results. She made one tremendous spring, rose high in the air, cleared the pony's back, and alighted in some inexplicable manner on her feet on the other side, where she stood facing "Lone Star" and gazing in calm bewilderment at the havoc around her. The recoil of her sudden spring had been equal to the momentum of her rise. The poor groom was hurled forcibly backward, fortunately on to the soft turf, where he lay too dazed for the moment to make any effort to get up. Lois's horse, a spirited creature, seeing this huge projectile shoot up in the air and alight under his very nose, was dancing frantically round on his hind feet, pawing the air, with fire in his eye,

to Mrs. Darcy's infinite terror. The horses attached to the buckboard were almost as badly frightened, springing from side to side, backing and pulling; the driver had hard work to hold them. The only creature who seemed absolutely unaffected by the catastrophe was "Lone Star," who stood in the same sleepy and dejected attitude, head down, and eyes half closed, with an air of utmost indifference to what he evidently considered was none of his business.

Not a sound had been uttered by any one for the first few minutes. All had been either dazed by the suddenness of the event, or were too intensely conscious of their own and Lois's peril. But when the groom, recovering from his first stunned sensation, sprang to the head of Lois's horse and together they calmed him down, and the driver of the buckboard had succeeded in quieting his horses also, the full absurdity of the scene burst upon them, and no kindly desire to spare Miss Doddridge's feelings could restrain the uncontrollable peals of laughter of the girls. It was irresistible. Mrs. Waters, watching the start from the piazza and standing aghast at the unexpected turn of affairs, the groom, and the driver, and Miss Doddridge

herself were utterly convulsed. Lois nearly fell from her horse in her paroxysms of laughter, and one of the girls did roll off the buckboard. When they were quieted down at last and Mrs. Waters had run to the kitchen for a chair, Miss Doddridge calmly announced that she thought if the groom had no objections she would try it again; she believed she knew exactly how to do it now, just when to spring and how much force to use. Everybody tried to dissuade her, but she was firm. The groom looked rueful, but said he was willing to risk it if she was, and seeing she was resolved, Mrs. Darcy only insisted she should wait until Lois and the buckboard had started on. So the cavalcade moved down the street, where they took up their position at a safe distance to await the result, which, to the surprise of every one, proved a perfect success. But the sight of the little pony jogging comfortably along, almost concealed by Miss Doddridge's ample proportions and voluminous skirts, was too much for the girls. They went into convulsions again, with difficulty repressed by the time Miss Doddridge, calm and self-satisfied, had joined them.

An expedition so auspiciously begun could not

lack for hilarity. The most trivial thing started them afresh, and Mrs. Darcy found she had her hands full to preserve proper decorum until they were well out of the city streets, when she gave up trying and let them give free and noisy vent to their merriment.

Lois and Miss Doddridge at first fell far behind the others, for Miss Doddridge naturally felt afraid to venture off a walk or a jog trot, and Lois would not desert her. But, encouraged by Lois, and finding her horse so safe and so comfortable, she was soon taking short canters, and before long they both went dashing by the buckboard on a full gallop, lustily cheered by the girls.

It was all too short a ride for Lois, who, exhilarated by finding herself once more on a spirited horse, made little detours into side roads or dashed ahead and back again to add to its length. Crossing Hocanock Ferry threatened to be another exciting affair. The ferryman was on the other side of the river, and a horn covered with inscriptions, placed there by preceding generations of excursionists, was stuck on a little stick by the roadside, and indicated the method of summoning him. Isabel seized

it and blew a resounding blast, and then they had to patiently await his slow progress toward them. Most of the horses, like sensible creatures, walked steadily across the gangway and on to the boat; but Lois's horse was evidently a stranger to the Camelot River and its primitive modes of crossing, for, the instant he saw the huge scow approaching the shore and divined that he was expected to entrust himself to such a suspicious looking object, he began to remonstrate in a very forcible manner. Lois rather enjoyed the effort of controlling her curvetting and prancing steed, and would have liked to give an exhibition of her horsemanship by compelling him to cross on to the boat, but out of regard for her mother's terror she dismounted and let the driver lead him on while she stood at the head of his horses. And it was quite as well that she did, for in the middle of the river, the deep, swiftly-flowing water all about him, a sudden terror seized him, and it taxed the driver's strength and skill to prevent his plunging overboard, while Lois found she had something to do to keep the other horses quiet, excited by his plunging. "Lone Star" as usual, remained in statuesque indifference

with Miss Doddridge on his back. She had decided not to dismount, having begun to feel implicit confidence in "Lone Star's" steadiness, and not having her plucky little groom as assistant in mounting, she did not feel like undertaking to train the driver for that difficult position, even if he had been courageous enough to offer himself as candidate.

But the crossing was made without any accident, and soon the little cavalcade began the ascent of Mt. Hoaryhead, a winding road through the woods, until half-way up they were obliged to leave their horses and betake themselves to the little car drawn up by cable. The almost perpendicular ascent frightened some of the party. They declared they never could trust themselves to that little box, and preferred to mount the five hundred and twenty-two steps leading to the summit, or climb the steep foot-path. The glorious view that burst upon them from the piazza of the Prospect House was a revelation to some of the girls from the prairies of the West, to whom mountains and mountain views were all a strange, new experience. The whole Camelot valley lay spread out before them. The wide river winding through

rich meadows, with populous towns dotting its banks at intervals of only a few miles, villages nestling in the valleys or clinging to the hillsides, so embowered in the flaming splendor of crimson and gold foliage that often only the spires of the churches or the smoking chimneys of the factories indicated their location, and in the west the broken masses and purple ridges of the Berkshire Hills. Through the telescope they could see the girls moving about the campus of Gale, and read the time on the clock of the old college hall at Houghton. But no view, however beautiful, will keep girls, bubbling over with life and fun, long enthralled. Some of them came up presently with an air of great disgust to announce that there were a lot of Houghton men in the parlors, and threw the whole party into a little flurry of excitement. There were loud exclamations of "too bad! we wanted to dance." "What will we do now, Mrs. Darcy? We can't stay out on the piazza all the time." Mrs. Darcy herself was in somewhat of a quandary, for she had visions of men thronging the rooms to the exclusion or discomfort of their party; but the difficulty was solved by three of the Houghton men appearing

and proving to be old friends of Miss Arden and Miss Doddridge. They were introduced to Mrs. Darcy, and immediately preferred a request that their party might be permitted to join hers. There were only six of them. Isabel and Miss Doddridge could vouch for three of them as being "all right," and they were ready to vouch for the other three. So after all they proved "a blessing in disguise," as Isabel said, and the girls did not find the dancing any the less enjoyable for partners in black coats, although they had often loyally vowed that their college dances without men were the most delightful dances conceivable.

And when they had had enough of dancing they sang Gale songs and Houghton songs until the Houghton men began to wonder why the Gale girls made no movement toward starting if they had any idea of getting home in time for supper. When it was inadvertently disclosed that the Gale girls had arranged to stay to supper and go home by moonlight, the men managed to consult together in that quiet and unobtrusive way men have, and changed their own plans accordingly.

Some one suggested that if they did not look

out they would miss the sunset, and there was a general rush for the piazza just in time to see old Sol disappear in royal splendor behind the Berkshire Hills. But as he departed he flung behind him blazing torches that kindled the light inflammable mists where they fell, and sent the flames leaping and quivering from one cloud mass to another until the whole heavens from the most distant rim of the Berkshires on the west to the far outlying plains of Leicester on the east were one grand conflagration. It was such a sunset as some of them had never seen, and even the light-hearted college youths and maidens were awed into silence by its unearthly beauty. As the splendor died out, leaving the earth cold and gray, and fast disappearing beneath them, they recovered speech.

On that mountain height there had come with the setting of the sun a sudden, penetrating chill, and as Lois said,

> "While no longer dumb,
> We're almost numb."

"Let's have a run just for fun," added Isabel quickly, and Mr. Beacher, of Houghton, added, "To warm us up while we wait for sup." Their rash flights into verse met with the derision they

deserved, in the midst of which Lois began again,

"Come, let's start and stop your laughter,
Gale girls first and Houghton after."

And suiting the action to the word, she darted off down the long piazza. Isabel followed a close second, calling back,

"Follow the leaders who go before ye,
Run for dear old Gale and glory."

And Mr. Beacher, not to be outdone, shouted in stentorian tones,

"Come Houghton men, who never take a dare,
And prove your prowess to these maidens fair."

Then such a race around the four sides of the big hotel—the girls off like a flock of birds and the men just waiting to give them a good start, and following in a business-like manner that showed their athletic training. But they had given the girls such a big handicap that some of them came in ahead, Isabel first and Lois just behind her.

Mrs. Darcy was inclined to be a little shocked at such hoydenish behavior, but it was all done so quickly, with absolutely no rudeness on the part of the men, which Mrs. Darcy feared,

nothing but merry shouts of laughter, applause for the winners and derision for the "booby," Mr. Hamilton, the trained athlete of the party, who, while apparently straining every nerve, had managed to keep just behind Miss Doddridge, whose stately proportions were not specially adapted to fleetness of foot. And this evidence of a good heart was not lost on Mrs. Darcy.

They all came in warm and glowing, to find a great fire of logs blazing in the big hall, and supper hot and tempting awaiting them in the dining-room.

What bright eyes and magnificent color gathered around the supper table, and what dishevelled locks too. To some of them like Lois it was not unbecoming, the wind having set a fringe of tiny golden curls free that made a bewitching setting for the dark, glowing eyes and brilliant cheeks. But some of them whose straight locks, defying the restraining side-combs, hung rather elfishly about their bright faces, it was not particularly becoming. They did not much care; they had not come to look pretty, but to have a good time, and they were having it. And as Isabel, who was always bemoaning her hopelessly straight hair, said,

"If the Houghton men don't admire us, why 'Nobody axed them, sir, she sayde.'"

But one of them evidently did admire Isabel. Mr. Beacher managed to secure a seat beside her at table, and while not at all neglecting Miss Doddridge on his other side, managed also to betray to the quick perceptions of the girls his admiration of Isabel's frank, jolly ways and frequent sallies of girlish wit.

Lois had found an admirer, too, in Mr. Hamilton, whose fair hair, blue eyes, and clear color gave him somewhat the appearance of an Englishman, and whose magnificent physique had won for him at Houghton the title of "The Giant." He was a nice, wholesome, well-mannered fellow, but standing somewhat in awe of women. He was greatly taken with Lois's glowing beauty, and had overcome his fear sufficiently to slip into a seat beside her at supper.

But Lois was not much used to men. She was too young to have had experience with any but her few boy friends at home, and she did not feel perfectly at her ease beside this Houghton giant, whom, nevertheless, she rather admired; she would much rather have been at the other end of the table where two or three girls

were seated with no restraining man near, and having such a good time. She did her best, nevertheless, to be entertaining in an easy young-ladyfied fashion, and was convinced she succeeded in being only priggish, stiff, and unnatural. She was really relieved when supper was over, and they adjourned to the big hall, and Mrs. Darcy proposed that they turn down the lights and tell stories by the firelight that filled the whole room with its ruddy glow. It was a happy suggestion. A cozy circle was quickly formed, and Mr. Beacher set the ball rolling by an amusing tale of college life. There were several good *raconteurs* among the men, and, what is much more rare, one or two among the girls. Isabel had a thrilling ghost story; she doted on ghost stories, and had one ready for every occasion. This one, she averred, was well authenticated, and she told it so well that it produced a sufficiently creepy effect to satisfy even her morbid desire, and called forth loud encores from the whole party. She had volumes of them at her tongue's end, but she absolutely refused to tell more than one other, which, however, was even more thrilling than the first. Then some one called on Lois for a story, and

came near throwing her into a panic by insisting. There was one thing she knew she could not do, tell a story and not find she had entirely left out the point when she had finished it. And tell one before those Houghton men? Never!

Mrs. Darcy had promised to have her party all safely home by nine o'clock, and the hour had come when, to redeem her promise, she must break up the charmed circle. It was too dark and late for any of them to think of taking either the path or the steps, and timid or not, they had to entrust themselves to the car and, four at a time, glide down the frightful descent. They found their buckboards and horses awaiting them at the foot, and "The Giant" had the extreme pleasure of assisting Lois to mount. And then, since Miss Doddridge hardly liked to display her new and hardly learned accomplishment before so many spectators, he suggested lifting her to hers, which he did with perfect ease, to the great admiration of the girls, who were all true *fin de siecle* girls in their admiration of physical strength.

The little cavalcade went merrily down the winding woodland road, the full "hunter's

moon" illuminating the sombre shadows with frequent broad patches of light, until they emerged on the level road basking in the full effulgence of its silvery beams.

Then Lois could not refrain from dashing ahead on "Rex"—the air was so exhilarating, the road so fine, and the moon so bright. And perhaps there was a little pardonable vanity mingled with her fondness for fast riding. She knew she was a good rider and looked well on a horse, and she was quite willing to show those Houghton men that there were some things she could do well, if peradventure they had considered her young and school-girlish. So away she dashed and was soon a mere speck in the distance, and one big Houghton fellow began to have gloomy forebodings that they should see no more of her, as they would very soon now be at the junction where the road to Houghton separated from the road to Norwood. And he only wished he was on a good horse by her side, galloping along through the lovely moonlight, and mentally resolved that if he could find a horse in Houghton big enough and strong enough to bear him, he would take to riding and his route should always be Norwoodward, and

sometime, perhaps, he should have the luck to meet Miss Darcy and try a dash with her. But she came back just as they had reached the parting of the ways and stopped to say good-night. The Houghton men sang a parting song, just slightly varying "Alma Mater O" to suit the occasion.

"We're gathered now, fair ladies, to join our parting song,
To pluck from memory's wreath the buds which there so sweetly throng,
To gaze upon the Houghton Road down which we quickly go,
But ere we part we'll drink the health of Fair Gale College O.

"Hither we came with hearts of joy, with sadness now we part,
And sing for you a parting song which speaks a brother's heart;
United firm in pleasing bonds which can no breaking know,
For Houghton boys can ne'er forget their fair Gale College O.

"Then brush the tear-drop from your eye and happy let us be,
For joy alone should fill the hearts of those as blest as we;
Our cheerful chorus ringing loud we'll give before we go,
The memory of Mountain Day and dear Gale College O."

It was quite a clever impromptu rendition for which Mr. Beacher was principally responsible, and was received with laughter and such hearty encores that they could not but respond. This time it was a trio—Mr. Beacher in a clear high tenor, Mr. Hamilton with a rich baritone, and Mr. Markham with a very good bass, sang

"The Soldier's Farewell," "How can I bear to leave thee?" The beautiful song was beautifully sung, and the girls knowing it was entirely impersonal, applauded it heartily. Then Mrs. Darcy said they really must go, and they went their separate ways, the Houghton men singing until out of hearing, "Good-night, Ladies."

They crossed the broad river, coming down a shining flood in the moonlight between its low-lying islands and sentinel hills, in almost perfect silence. It was too beautiful for any comment, and the hush of the scene seemed to have fallen even upon the spirited "Rex," who stood almost as quietly as the patient "Lone Star."

On the very stroke of nine they drew up before Mrs. Waters's door, a tired but a happy set of girls. As Isabel said to Lois when they were separating at the door:

"This has been a perfect day, and your mother does make the loveliest chaperone;" which made Lois very proud and very happy, as she repeated it to her mother when they were safe in their own little sitting-room.

CHAPTER VII

VESPERS

Mrs. Darcy had been very happy all of Friday, and most of Saturday following Mountain Day. She felt quite sure that Lois was happier for being with her, and had no such longings for independence and campus life as she had been half afraid she might be having.

But it is the nature of such ill seeds as were sown in her heart on the evening of the Sophomore reception to have a rank and sudden growth; to wither away in the broad sunshine of love and happiness; but never to die at the root, ready at the slightest encouragement to spring up full grown and deadly as the Upas tree.

Some girls from the Horton House called on Lois Saturday afternoon, and were full of the fine times they were having on the campus—the jolly spreads, the dances on Wednesday and Saturday nights, their adventures in trying to evade the night watchman and the matron. A little remark of Lois's after they were gone, that

would ordinarily have passed unnoticed, was construed by the newly developed sensitiveness of her mother to indicate a longing for the glories of the campus from which her mother's presence debarred her. There was nothing of the kind in Lois's heart. She did sometimes think it would be fine to be on the campus, but never, even in her remotest thoughts, would she have been willing to exchange the delight of having her mother with her for far greater enticements than had ever been presented.

But the demon of suspicion once roused is hard to down. The next day was a perfect October Sunday. Norwood never showed to better advantage than with its winding, picturesque Elm Street brilliant in autumn livery and thronged with well-dressed people, a large proportion of them pretty young girls, all moving in one direction, toward the churches clustered on the brow of the hill, where Main Street meets Elm.

Lois and her mother stopped at the pretty gray-stone Episcopal Church, one of the many handsome gifts to Norwood by non-residents. They were a little late, and the sweet young voices of the boy choir were chanting the pro-

cessional as they found their seats and bowed their heads in prayer. The beautiful service that followed did not bring the usual sense of calm peace to Mrs. Darcy. An undercurrent of something dark and disturbing, she was hardly conscious what, distracted her. She tried to ignore it, but it was there, and when once more at home with a quiet hour before dinner (Lois had stayed to Sunday-school), she sat down to reason with herself. It did no good, however. Simply recognizing the ugly thing gave it shape and increased its power. She was beginning now to feel that "those women," as she called them in her hurt, angry thoughts, were right. It was a disadvantage to Lois to keep her shut out from the innocent mirth and gay good-fellowship of college life. And no doubt she was stunting her child's full development by not placing her where she would be compelled to think and act for herself. As soon as she began to allow herself to believe this, it was only another step for the mother love to cry out, "What shall I do? O Lord, help me!" It was an earnest prayer from an agonized heart. Mrs. Darcy was not a selfish mother, but for sixteen years her life had been absorbed, merged

in the life of her child. To take her away now would be to rudely twist and tear and leave bleeding and lifeless the tendrils that had been growing closer and firmer every day of those sixteen years. And then the agonizing uncertainty of what was best for Lois. She did so earnestly covet the best for her, but it was so hard to be sure what that might be.

She was no nearer any conclusion when Lois came home, and finding her mother pale and languid, instantly divined a sick headache, an old St. Mark's foe, that with the change of climate seemed to have been thoroughly routed. Mrs. Darcy would have been glad to cover her trouble with that friendly cloak if it had been possible, but she was no dissembler, even in trifles, and the only thing left to do was to make a vigorous effort and throw off the horrid incubus, in which she succeeded so well as to be carried over to the opposite extreme of feverish gayety. Lois did not understand her mother's mood, but of one thing she felt sure—she could not be quite well, and she kept an anxious but covert watch of her.

At dinner Isabel invited Lois to go to vespers with her. Lois said she had decided to decline

all invitations to-day in favor of her mother, who had never yet attended vespers, and Lois wanted her to go; but if Isabel wished to go with them both, they would both be very glad—with a glance at her mother which sought approval.

Mrs. Darcy was in such a sensitive frame of mind that this new proof of Lois's thoughtfulness, little as it was, came near proving disastrous to her self-control. But she was able to combat successfully the sudden impulse to tears and second Lois's invitation warmly, whereupon Isabel expressed her pleasure in word and look. She admired Mrs. Darcy greatly, and was proud and happy to go anywhere with her.

It proved a wearing afternoon for Mrs. Darcy. She always looked forward to Sunday afternoon as a time for a sweet and restful visit with Lois, but Lois was so anxious about her mother's unusual looks and manner that Mrs. Darcy rather welcomed the advent of some Sunday callers, some of the college girls who had come in, they said, to have Mrs. Darcy "talk good" to them. Yet all through the talk that followed, bright and sweet most of it, she was conscious of the wearying struggle still going on within, until it became almost more of an effort than she was

equal to to keep up her share in the conversation. It was a relief when the time came for the girls to go off to keep their various engagements for vespers and Isabel came over to keep hers.

But it was not in human nature to be insensible to the soothing influences of that perfect hour of a perfect day. The bright, soft air, the lengthening shadows, the sunshine filtering through the gathering mists like gold-dust, all combined to bring more of peace than Mrs. Darcy had known for many hours. By the time they had reached the campus her heart was already lighter, and she was able to feel a keen joy in the beauty that seemed to rush to meet her there. Every day in this beautiful changing fall, nature had presented a new aspect. To-day she was all golden, and as they entered the campus the trees, yellow elms and maples, gave an impression of pushing forward and filling all the vacant spaces. A high wind the night before had shaken down many of the leaves, so that the ground was "thick inlaid with patines of bright gold." The effect was bewildering. The sheen of color was dazzling and so blended in the sunset sky, the atmos-

phere, the foliage and the ground that one felt half dizzy and confused with the golden splendor.

They went in with the throng of girls streaming in in all directions from their afternoon walks, and when they reached the chapel they found it fast filling and the rich low tones of the organ beginning the opening voluntary. A tall, graceful girl with sweet face and stylishly arranged hair who, Lois whispered to her mother, had been a model of Gibson's for his "Life" pictures, showed them to a seat half-way up the middle aisle. It was a very interesting sight to Mrs. Darcy, the room full of young girls, most of them pretty or looking so in their Sunday bravery, and many of them without hat or wrap, which gave an odd effect to a religious assembly. There was quite a sprinkling of men, too, most of them from Houghton, but a few of them were Norwood beaux who had either escorted their fair friends to the vesper service, or were there in the hope of meeting or seeing them. On the platform sat the choir of forty girls, selected, one might almost have thought, for their good looks as well as their singing ability. And behind the

desk, in his high-backed chair, sat the venerable President, on whom every eye rested with loving respect.

Very soon the organ modulated into the opening strains of "Jerusalem the Golden." They sang it through every verse and to listen to those hundreds of clear, soaring voices was to wish the hymn twice its length.

"Gifted in prayer" has a slightly irreverent sound, but nothing else seems to explain or describe the wonderful beauty and power of the prayers that the young women of Gale listen to day after day, week after week, year after year, from their President.

"Before the mountains were brought forth or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God."

Solemnly, grandly, in a clear, resonant voice, the words rolled over the bowed heads of that hushed assembly.

"O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth.

"When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained,

"What is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou visitest him?"

Ah, yes; it was easy now to see where he had got that wonderful "gift of prayer"—from much study of that matchless book of prayer; his whole soul was filled with the Psalmist's words of invocation and petition.

"Yet hast Thou permitted us, O Lord, to behold the glory of this perfect day; for Thou hast made us a little lower than the angels and hast crowned us with glory and honor.

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor yet hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the glories of that eternal city which Thou hast prepared for them that love Thee. Yet hast Thou vouchsafed unto Thy servants, O Lord most high, a glimpse of the glory that is to come in the splendor of the beauty with which Thou hast clothed the world to-day. And if our finite hearts are filled to overflowing with the beauty of our earthly dwelling-place, help us to realize therefrom the ineffable delights that await us when we shall abide in the beauty of Thy presence. Drive from our hearts all sordid and base thoughts; fill us with aspirations for that which is nobler and higher in the

life here and which shall make us more meet to enter into the life hereafter.

"If there are those in Thy presence to-day, O Lord, who have failed in living up to their own high ideals; failed in following in the footsteps of the lowly Jesus of Nazareth; who, discouraged, or careless, or frivolous, are seeking only the joys and pleasures of this world, let not this day which Thou hast sent as a harbinger of heaven's joys fail in its mission to them. May it help them to realize how empty and tasteless is the cup from which they are drinking, and may they grasp instead, with firm hand, the cup which Thou wouldst press to their lips, full to overflowing with love and eternal life.

"And if in any heart bowed before Thee there lies the crushing weight of sorrow, or dark and brooding care or distracting anxiety, let the peace of this holy hour descend upon it. Teach them, O Lord, how close about us lie the glories of that other world from which to-day Thou hast lifted the veil a little, and revealed to our mortal eyes a brief vision of our radiant and eternal future.

"Show them how transitory are the sorrows and troubles of this life. 'Joy cometh in the

morning,' and the morning is eternal. Teach them to bring all their sorrows and all their cares and cast them upon Thee, the burden-bearer. May they each go forth from Thy presence with lightened hearts, as 'one whom his mother comforteth.'

"And now, O Lord, we pray Thee, strengthen the weak, deliver the tempted, rouse the careless, help the needy, comfort the sorrowing. And let the beauty of our Lord be upon us, and the glory, and the praise, and the power be Thine forever and forever."

Softly, to the low tones of the organ, the choir and the congregation chanted with heads still bowed, "Our Father, who art in heaven." The second "Amen," soft and distant, dropped down like an angel's benediction. Then, after a moment's pause, the heads were lifted, but the music went on. Exquisite harmonies, so faint and far they seemed more like strains from angel choirs than any earthly music. The listeners were almost afraid to breathe, lest they should lose some ravishing note. At last, but very gradually, the distant strains grew nearer, they rose, they swelled until they rolled forth a mighty triumphant pæan, then gradually they

died away again to the same divine and distant harmonies, and while every ear was strained to catch the last lingering notes, a single, rich baritone voice rose soft and clear,

"Come unto me ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

The voice ceased, and the organ modulating again into the music of the beautiful vesper hymn softly sung, made a fitting ending to the brief and beautiful service.

"Day is dying in the west,
Heaven is touching earth with rest.
Wait and worship while the night
Sets her evening lamps alight
Through all the sky.
Holy, holy, holy,
Lord God of hosts,
Heaven and earth are full of Thee,
Heaven and earth are praising Thee,
O Lord most high."

On the wings of music and of prayer had flown away all Mrs. Darcy's doubt and distress. She did not know what decision she might finally come to with regard to Lois; some day she would take time and think it all out; but whatever it might be, she would no longer let herself be distressed and unhappy. She would try to do the best thing, and leave the results to

Him who can make all things work together for good. She felt as if the prayer and the music and the hymns had been all for her. With a light heart she laid aside every care and entered at once upon her heritage of joy and peace.

As they passed out into the corridor, they found Mr. Beacher and Mr. Hamilton in waiting to walk home with them if they might,—a permission readily granted. It was nearly dark; a yellow glow in the west was all that remained of the golden day. There was a frosty touch in the air that had not been there when they went in to vespers, and that made the brisk walk up Elm Street none the less pleasant.

It was just supper time when they reached Mrs. Waters's, and Mrs. Darcy, whose hospitable instincts would not permit her to send away hungry, two young men seven miles from home, invited them to remain to supper, an invitation the girls would never have dared to give, but which they were not at all sorry to see quickly and gratefully accepted. Of course, the rest of the girls were all thrown into a flurry of excitement by the presence of the Houghton men at the supper table, but the excitement was not an unpleasurable one. They had all met them on

the mountain, and they had therefore much of mutual interest to talk over, and it was an animated supper table with no embarrassing silences. After supper they adjourned to Mrs. Darcy's sitting-room, warm and bright with the rosy light from the lamp and the ruddy fire-light.

Mrs. Darcy sat down to the piano, and with Lois for soprano, Isabel for alto, Mr. Beacher for tenor, and Mr. Hamilton for bass, they had a fine quartette, and sang the beautiful hymns in the college collection until Mrs. Darcy refused to play for them any longer, for fear of tiring their voices.

Then they sat around the fire and talked, and it was not all frivolous talk either. Much that was earnest and manly, and many things that were true and womanly were said, until suddenly Mr. Beacher sprang to his feet with an exclamation: "Mr. Hamilton, had you any idea it was ten o'clock?"

And when "The Giant," who did not seem at all timid with Mrs. Darcy, though he was still a little constrained with Lois, shook hands with Mrs. Darcy at parting, he said:

"This is the most home-like evening I have spent since I came to college."

And then, when they were all gone, Lois turned to her mother:

"Mamma, this has been almost as good as Sunday evenings at St. Mark's, when some of the boys used to come in to supper and we had such nice times singing afterward. Oh, I don't see what girls at college do without a mother!"

And that was the crowning touch of happiness to the peace that had come to Mrs. Darcy at vespers.

CHAPTER VIII

OCTOBER DAYS

It was Friday afternoon, and Lois was just going out of the door, hat on, books under her arm, bound for her two o'clock recitation. She had half closed the door, when she stopped and put her head in again.

"Don't forget, mamma. Three o'clock sharp, in front of the old gymnasium. You must go to Paradise." With this rather startling announcement, and with an assurance from her mother that she would be on hand, she departed, and promptly at three o'clock Mrs. Darcy was in front of the old gymnasium waiting for Lois, and looking off toward the wooded heights where she had been informed Paradise lay. Lois came out in a minute and begged her to wait a few minutes longer until she should run down to the new gymnasium for some oars.

"I have been awfully lucky to get a boat on this lovely day, but I did, and I am going to give you a row; won't that be fine?"

She didn't wait for an answer, but was off like a flash, and in an incredibly short time reappeared with a pair of oars over her shoulder.

"But Lois," said her mother, as she rejoined her, "what is Paradise? I had no idea there was any water there."

"You'll see," said Lois, "and I only hope it will surprise you as completely as it did me. I have been hearing of Paradise ever since I came, but I have had the vaguest ideas as to how to find it or what it was, and so when Miss Baker took me there the other day, I was thoroughly astonished and delighted, and determined on the spot that you should see it the very first pleasant day."

They were passing down behind all the great college houses, beyond the observatory, past the greenhouses and the botanical gardens, through a gate across a road, where they stopped on a high embankment.

With a tragic wave of her hand, Lois said: "Behold!" And the surprise and delight depicted on her mother's face was all she could desire. Below them lay a winding sheet of water, sometimes widening to the dimensions of a modest lake, sometimes narrowing to a small

river. The opposite banks were high and brilliant with flaming reds and yellows. It was a warm day, a little bit of the late summer back again, and a soft purple haze gave an impression of wider extent and the charm of indefiniteness to the sylvan scene. If anything else was needed to make it seem like a bit from one of Turner's ideal landscapes, it was supplied by the boats gliding in various directions over the smooth water, rowed by girls in light summer dresses. The soft tinkle of a guitar accompanying two voices, a soprano and alto, in "Fair Gale," completed the illusion for Mrs. Darcy that this was a scene out of some old romance, and not a bit of every-day life that had been going on ever since she had been in Norwood, almost at her very door, for Lois told her the road they had just crossed was College Lane, and if they should follow it up a short two minutes' walk it would take them on to Elm Street, just above Mrs. Waters's. Lois had to rouse her mother finally from her dream-like state of reverie, to go down to the little dock, where they found a boat moored, and, stepping in, pushed off. They glided across the lake and then followed the curving shore for a long dis-

tance, under overhanging branches. Lois said they could go probably for miles, for they were in Mad River, and nothing to hinder their rowing right on to the Camelot.

They were approaching a little cove, a natural harbor with a pretty little beach, and shut in by drooping elms and maples. Lois had just said if they had any way of getting the boat back, they would land there, and return through the woods, it was so picturesque; and she wanted her mother to see just as much of Paradise as possible.

"Boat ahoy!" some one called, as they bent their heads to pass under the low hanging branches into the little cove. Lois lifted her head quickly and looked over her shoulder.

"Miss Baker and Miss Felton! Don't you want a boat ride?"

The two girls were seated on a big boulder at the foot of the great elm, that formed the principal part of the canopy over the cove, and they greeted Mrs. Darcy before Miss Baker responded. "Of course we do, little sister; but you don't suppose that little skiff will hold four, do you?"

"Oh! no; I only thought you might like a

row, and if so you can take the boat back for me; mamma and I want to walk back through the woods."

"Nothing would delight us more; we were just longing for a boat," said both girls together.

"Let me have the end of your oar, and I'll pull you in, little sister," added Miss Baker, and it took a very few minutes to effect the change of elements—the two girls on the water and Lois and her mother on terra firma.

"I wish we had an hour or two," said Lois, consulting her watch, "to explore all these winding paths. It is just full of the loveliest places; but we have exactly three-quarters of an hour till Analysis, and I would not miss it to-day for anything; we are to have the Sonata Pathetique."

But in three-quarters of an hour they found they had time to dip into many a lovely dell and climb many a picturesque headland, filling their hands with treasures from the woods—bits of exquisite moss, bright colored lichens, and gorgeous branches of scarlet, and gold maple, and crimson oak for decorating their rooms.

When they reached the college they left their treasures in the janitor's room, and hurried to the Music Hall, to find it already rapidly filling. The Friday afternoon concerts were always thronged, but they managed to secure two very good seats where they could see the professor as well as hear him. They had a rich feast before them—Schubert, Chopin, Mendelssohn, Beethoven, and the great master, represented by his great masterpiece, if to any single composition of his can be accorded that title.

The concert was preluded by a half-hour's talk on the four great composers, and to Mrs. Darcy it was a renewed wonder how a man with none of the external signs of genius, unless a somewhat eccentric personnel be one, with a face that was absolutely impassive, could be not only keenly analytic in his dissection of the composers and their works, but could rise to such heights of eloquence as almost to sweep one off his feet, metaphorically speaking, and then follow the half-hour's talk with an hour of exquisite music flowing from his finger tips—impromptus, nocturnes, concertos, bewitching, entrancing, bewildering—and then the final grand, absorbing, indescribable Sonata Pathetique.

As they passed out into the fast-deepening twilight, Lois sighed. "I feel just stuffed with beauty. I don't believe I could stand another thing to-day. That lovely Paradise and that divine music! My eyes and my ears, and my soul are full. What an ideal life it is, this life at Gale!" And her mother felt so too.

Mr. Hamilton had been to call twice since the Vesper Sunday. Once Lois was out to supper and to spend the evening at one of the college houses, and at first he was greatly disappointed. But Mrs. Darcy had received him so kindly and entertained him so delightfully that he had gone away quite reconciled.

The other time he had been more fortunate, and had found Lois and her mother both at home. And although he and Mrs. Darcy still did most of the talking, he felt that it was pleasure enough to be sitting by that cozy fire talking to the mother and looking at the daughter; which last, however, he did very discreetly.

Lois had quite lost her fear of him, but he was not "easy to talk to," she thought, and she contented herself with an occasional saucy speech or expression of opinion at variance with his, which, if it was intended to draw him into

conversation with her, proved a dismal failure. For he received everything she said with a slow look of admiration and a polite rejoinder, and immediately addressed himself again to her mother. Lois would have thought him stupid, but his conversation with her mother showed he was not. He was a little slow, perhaps, and not witty, and yet, in spite of his apparent ignoring of her, Lois rather liked him, he was so big and simple-hearted and manly.

The lovely October days were flying fast. Lois and her mother, anxious to make the most of them, had taken many delightful walks and two or three rides, for Mrs. Darcy was as fond of riding as her daughter. And on one of their rides they had met Mr. Hamilton on a powerful gray horse, and he had asked permission to join them. And Lois, thinking his beast had a suspiciously Clydesdale or Percheron look, built more for strength than speed, maliciously challenged him to a race, and of course, quickly out-distanced him, as she knew she would. But he forgave her when she came dashing back, with hair and skirts flying behind her and looking distractingly pretty. He was big, and therefore so soft-hearted he

was ready to forgive anything to a pair of bright eyes and rosy cheeks, or at least to a pair of bright eyes and rosy cheeks that were just then playing sad havoc with his impressionable southern heart.

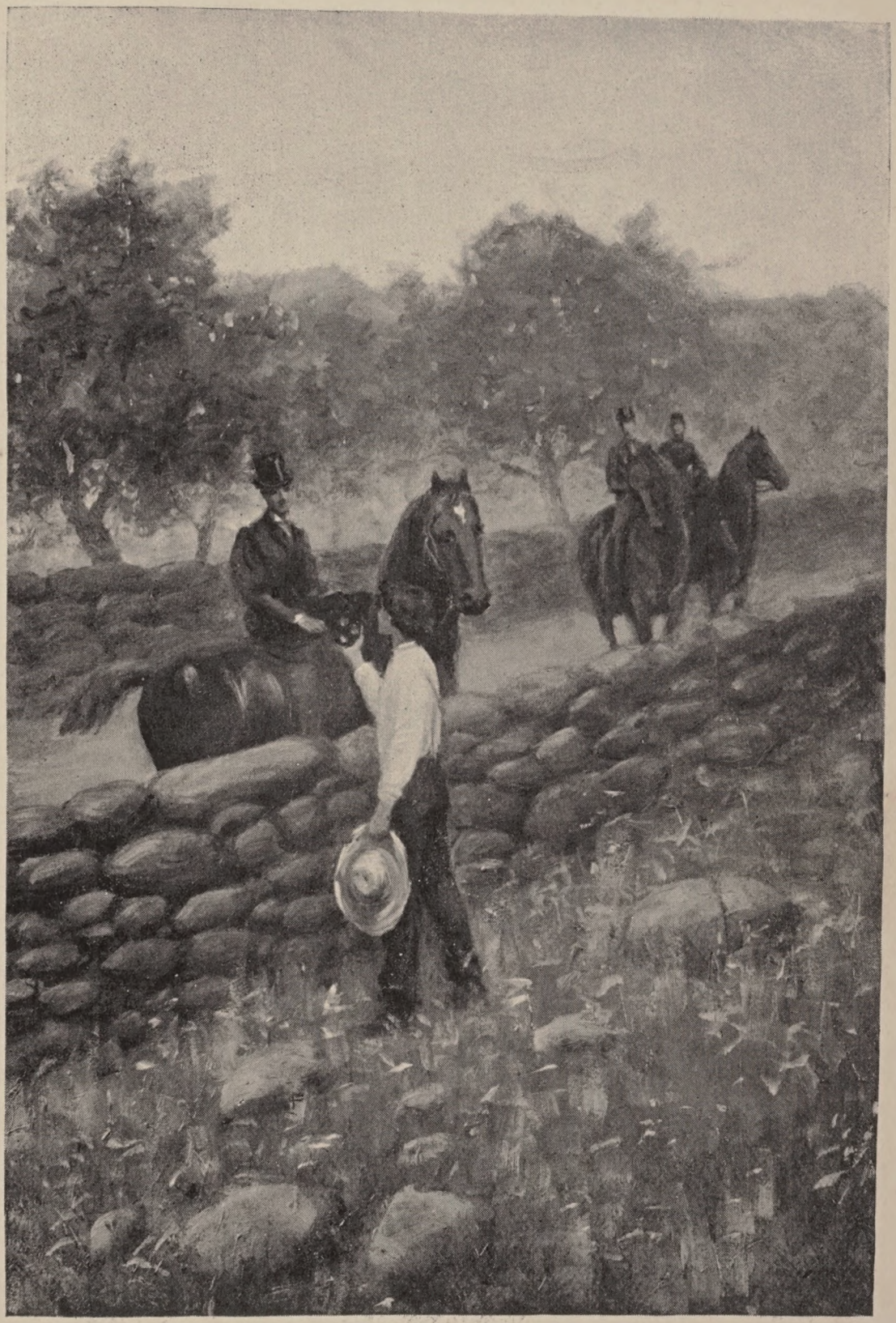
They were riding toward Old Mayville. Mrs. Darcy had driven there once with Mrs. Waters, and had ever since been anxious to have Lois see the most beautiful and the most typical of New England villages. They walked their horses slowly through the magnificent avenue of elms, a mile long, such trees as Mrs. Darcy and Lois had never seen and hardly imagined. And scarcely less interesting than the elms were the quaint gambrel-roofed houses, some of them fine specimens of old colonial architecture and built in old colonial days. Coming from the west, this old New England teeming with historical associations was intensely interesting.

At the end of the street they turned their horses to ride back again through the same magnificent avenue, but Mr. Hamilton proposed if they had never seen Old Bradley they should return through that still older and quainter village. There was just one objection—the ferry. Mrs Darcy could not get used to what

seemed to her a very perilous way of crossing the river; but Mr. Hamilton was with them, and he suggested they should dismount and let him hold the horses, and that would save all nervousness.

The road to the ferry lay between orchards bending with their tempting fruit. And now Mrs. Darcy and Lois had an opportunity of seeing for the first time an apple harvesting.

Boxes and barrels filled with the golden and crimson spheres and piles of them under every tree. Men with ladders and long poles carefully picking the fruit and women sorting and packing it, and because the October air, exhilarating as wine for walking or riding, was cool to stand in all day, the women had always some bright shawl about their shoulders or gay scarf about their heads to add a touch of color to the picturesque scene. And when, at one particularly fine orchard they stopped to watch the busy harvesters, there must have been something wistful in Mrs. Darcy's looks, for a handsome young fellow, his dark eyes and brown curls and red shirt, giving him the air of a Neapolitan, brought her a handful of choice fruit, and at her delighted thanks told her where,



A HANDSOME YOUNG FELLOW BROUGHT A HANDFUL OF FRUIT

(See page 118)

a little farther down the road she would find a yard with some fine eating apples, better than these, piled under a big tree, and they could go in and help themselves.

As they rode away after thanking him heartily again, Lois addressed her mother in a tone of stern rebuke:

"Mamma, I want to know what you did to that young man. Did you bewitch him? How could he know the thoughts of your heart? Mr. Hamilton, I feel compelled to make a startling revelation to you about my mother. There is one thing she will have by hook or by crook, by fair means or foul, and that is apples. And she very much prefers foul means to fair; robbing an orchard is her one grand passion."

"Lois!" was Mrs. Darcy's reproachful ejaculation. "Mr. Hamilton, please remember those apples are mine, and Lois is not to have one of them."

He had stowed Mrs. Darcy's fruit in a capacious side pocket, and when they reached the designated pile he dismounted and filled his remaining pockets, until his symmetrical figure lost its graceful proportions and assumed somewhat aldermanic outlines.

He was riding between them, and Mrs. Darcy was still insisting that he should not give Lois a single apple because of her undutiful speech. He was assuring her that her lightest command was law to him, when Lois calmly leaned over from her horse and helped herself from his bulging pockets—a petty larceny he pretended not to see until it was too late.

They found no difficulty at the ferry, for out of regard to Mrs. Darcy's fears, they all dismounted, and could quietly enjoy the beautiful river, which was, if possible, more picturesque here than at the lower Hockanock ferry.

Once over, they mounted their horses and came down the wide level road on a brisk canter. The shadows were lengthening as they came through Old Bradley, with its wide village green bordered on both sides by the pretty village street, with over-arching elms and quaint houses. It was the hour of the day at which Old Bradley looks most picturesque, with the long shadows on the level sward, and they would have liked to linger, but Mrs. Darcy said they were in danger now of being late to supper, and so they gave the reins to their horses and galloped across the meadows to the old Camelot

River bridge, where many notices posted along the road and on the bridge itself warned them to moderate their pace; and so into the streets of Norwood and home.

Mrs. Darcy had rather insisted that Mr. Hamilton should leave them on the other side of the river, it was so much nearer Houghton; but he would have ridden many a mile for the pleasure of lifting Lois from her horse, even if the ride itself had not been a continued delight.

At the door they found a man waiting to take the horses, who started to help Lois dismount; but Mr. Hamilton was too quick for him. He was on the ground in a minute, and with an air of command he flung his bridle to the man.

"Hold my horse, please; I will assist the ladies."

And so he proved that he might be slow of speech, but he was quick of action, ready to seize and command the situation if he desired it.

But the October days kept flying. The leaves were almost gone now. Only the ivies were left, more gorgeous in their coloring than anything Lois had ever dreamed of. College

Hall, Art Hall, and First Church were as if cut from huge carnelians exquisitely carved and studded with rubies and garnets. And now even the ivies were falling and turning brown. October was fast drawing to a close, and the one topic of conversation was the Mansfield-Houghton foot-ball game early in November.

CHAPTER IX

TALLY-HO FOR HOUGHTON

THE girls at Mrs. Waters's had secured the swellest drag in town for the game, a big blue tally-ho, with baskets and horn complete. And, as there were places for a few more than their own party, they had invited some from the outside to "fill up," and Lois had invited Miss Baker.

A snow storm set in the day before and desolated their hearts. It looked as if there would be no game, or if there were that it would not be considered prudent to go in such weather. Saturday morning it was still snowing, and all hope of witnessing the game was abandoned, and loud were the lamentations. But about noon it suddenly cleared off, and the sun shone out warm and bright. Mrs. Waters and Mrs. Darcy consulted together and decided it was entirely safe to venture.

Then there was hurrying to and fro. The order for the tally-ho had been countermanded,

and now Lois was sent in hot haste to re-command it. There was a scurry of messengers all over town to collect the scattered forces, and a general rush into warm clothing, while Mrs. Waters hurried up dinner.

They had hoped to be off a little after one o'clock, for the roads, of course, would be heavy, but it was almost two when, at a brave blast from the horn by Isabel, who had been discovered to be the only one equal to that feat, the driver swung his long lash over the heads of the leaders, and they were off, proudly floating the Houghton colors.

Their route lay through the town, and they created as much of a sensation as a party of girls on a tally-ho is usually willing to make, no matter how modest and retiring each one individually may be. The sun was shining brightly as they crossed the long bridge over the Camelot, and Mt. Hoaryhead and Mt. Ben were showing their snow-covered flanks through a rapidly lifting veil of mist.

Through Old Bradley they wound their horn gayly to the delight of the Bradley small boy, and their four trusty steeds made such good time that the old college clock of Houghton

was just on the stroke of three, the hour for which the game was called, as they drove into the grounds. The open stand was already crowded with fair visitors, flying either the purple or the green, and two black masses were drawn up on either side of the field—Houghton men and Mansfield men—prepared to do their duty by their respective yells, whatever their men on the gridiron might do.

The driver whipped up his horses, Isabel blew her best, and the color-bearers waved their flags as they swept round the head of the field to the Houghton side. And as soon as the Houghton men recognized their colors they greeted them with, "Rah! rah! rah! Rah! rah! rah! Houghton!" At which the girls, suddenly disconcerted, dropped their flags and their horn. They were none the less proud, however, and glad they had not arrived as early as they had at first intended, when the salute would have been impossible.

They had hardly drawn up in position behind the Houghton line when the two teams came running on the field in their green and white and purple and white sweaters. They looked very gay and picturesque, only their legs were

so queer, thought Lois, who had never seen a foot-ball game and was eagerly taking in every detail. When they pulled off their sweaters and handed them to the men standing by to receive them, they were altogether "queer." She had not been prepared to see creatures stuffed and padded out of all semblance to manly grace, and looking in outline like nothing so much as like portraits of our Dutch ancestors. It was a distinct shock to Mrs. Darcy, too, who had expected something of the natty appearance of a base-ball nine.

"What is the matter with their hair?" she asked anxiously of Miss Baker, who had seen many games and was explaining the points to the novices.

"Oh! you know they have to wear it long, and when they pull off their sweaters over their heads it makes them look like that."

"Well! they look like a set of shock-headed Esquimaux, with their seal-skin suits turned wrong-side out," said Lois discontentedly. "They don't look nice."

"Oh! don't you like them?" exclaimed Miss Harrow, from her high seat at the back. "I love to see them in their suits; I think they are dear."

Miss Harrow was *au fait* in foot-ball, and adored everything connected with it.

"Look, girls, they are going to begin!" said Lois, excitedly; "and I do believe that man crouching behind the crowd is Mr. Hamilton; do you think it could be, mamma?"

"It does look like him," said Mrs. Darcy, slowly, "but I think it is hardly possible. He would surely have said he was going to play when you told him we were coming over to the game."

"I should have thought so, too; but he is so modest, and I thought it was queer he didn't say at once he would come around to our drag, but instead he only said he would try to see us, if possible. That must be the reason. Girls, is that Mr. Hamilton?"

The girls all thought it was, but they had no time to decide, for just then play began, and it was all wild excitement.

What Lois saw was a little crowd stooping around the ball in the centre, and some men on the outside, crouched as if for a spring. She heard a voice call three numbers; it sounded like 157, 63, 29; then a big man, bigger than all the others, who stood off at a little distance

with head down, made a sudden rush at the central crowd, who closed round him in a wild scramble, while one or two on the outside seemed to run aimlessly around the struggling mass, and one or two others, big, burly fellows, planted their backs against it and pushed.

That was the way it looked to Lois, and when the seething, struggling mass all went down together, like some enormous centipede with wildly writhing legs, she could hardly keep from screaming, she was so sure some one was having the life crushed out of him under that solid mass of flesh and blood.

The mass had writhed forward a little and crossed one of the white lines, then in a moment the struggle seemed to be over, the heap of composite humanity disintegrated slowly until only the lower one lay still with the ball under him. "Lifeless," Lois thought and shuddered, but in a moment he sprang nimbly up, and then they all got ready to go through the same thing again, only a little nearer the goal that was nearest their drag.

"Oh! I do wish I could understand it," said Isabel, eagerly. She was, if possible, even

more excited than Lois, and it was all such a bewildering muddle.

"If I only knew whether to wave my flag or not. Did Houghton gain that point or Mansfield?" anxiously inquired Lois, who was one of the color-bearers and felt her responsibility.

Nobody seemed to know, for nobody had yet discovered which was the Houghton and which the Mansfield goal; and so her mother advised that she should watch a large purple flag near them, and wave when it waved. There was no telling from the yelling, for the Houghton "police," who stood just inside the line facing the Houghton men and so facing the drag, kept their men yelling at regular intervals.

"Now boys, the old yell, with a will; Rah! rah! rah! Rah! rah! rah! Houghton!" Or sometimes, keeping time with his big cane, it was just, "Houghton, Houghton, Houghton, Houghton!"

It was a never-failing interest to watch the "police," fine-looking fellows, every one of them, and to see the obedient way in which the men responded to their ceaseless calls, splitting their throats in their efforts to out-yell Mansfield. Of course, they did it, as they were at

home and could muster more men, and it was some consolation to the party on the drag that the Houghton yell was the finest, for on the gridiron things were going wrong from the start. The Mansfield men were heavier and better players, it seemed to the girls, who were beginning to get a little inkling of the game, and could at least see that the Mansfield men were working steadily toward the goal, and the Houghton men were powerless to hold them back, though they seemed to be fighting splendidly. Almost every time the line re-formed, one more white bar had been crossed and the Mansfield men had driven the ball so much nearer the goal. Occasionally though, the Houghton men forced them back a little, and then how the purple flags waved!

But the last white line was reached, and there the struggle was desperate and prolonged. Suddenly some one broke loose from the struggling mass, darted over the line with the ball in his arms and made the first touch-down. And how Mansfield cheered! No cadenced college yell, but wild cheers, which Houghton tried to drown with its "old yell," given again and again.

Then, while the players scattered over the

field, each perhaps in a regularly assigned position, though the girls did not know, two men brought the ball out, and one, lying down, carefully placed it according to the directions of the other, now a little to the right, now more to the left. Finally, after much stooping and sighting, it was just right. With one powerful kick it soared up in the air, high above and far beyond the goal. And now the girls understood what a touch-down, and what a goal was, and how much each counted; and those who were keeping score put down six for Mansfield.

Up to this time there had been no disaster, but in the midst of the next play the game was suddenly stopped; two or three men gathered round one poor fellow stretched on the ground; a negro in a purple sweater, who had been hovering around just inside the lines with a leather bag in his hand, rushed up, while one of the men who had been carrying the players' discarded sweaters, ran forward and made a soft pillow of them under his head. What the negro did the girls could not see, but in a very few minutes the wounded man was up, trying to stand on a leg that seemed to be in splints.

Mrs. Darcy had read much of the horrors of

foot-ball, and on the ground of her reading had often inveighed against the brutal game. Now here she was actually assisting at one as a spectator, and having visible proof of its brutality in that poor fellow's broken leg, for she thought it could be nothing less, and her heart sickened and her interest was all gone. But when the sufferer began to limp around and actually went right on playing, although still limping and apparently rendering no effective service, she began to have doubts about the leg, and gradually found herself looking on again with renewed interest. The girls were loud in their expressions of sympathy; it was agonizing to see the poor fellow try to play with the painful limp, and it was a great relief to them all when he was at last obliged to give up and let some one take his place.

The same little drama was enacted several times again during the game—some poor fellow left white on the ground after the rush, but the deft services of the attendant always seemed to produce miraculous results, and while every new calamity awoke a fresh sense of sickening horror in the spectators on the drag, somehow, after a while, they seemed to get a little hardened.

While not lacking in intense sympathy with the wounded, still they were able more and more readily to console themselves with the assurance that he was probably not much hurt, only a little stunned; which Mrs. Darcy was inclined to think was a convincing proof of the brutalizing effect of the game on the spectators, at least.

In the meantime, Mansfield was making more touch-downs and more goals. The score when the first half was over stood eighteen to nothing. In the second half, Houghton played better; but still there was no making any headway against that terrible centre rush, who went through the opposing lines with irresistible force, like some huge projectile hurled from some old Roman catapult. But Houghton made one magnificent play, and it was Mr. Hamilton who made it, for the girls had procured some books of the game and set their doubts at rest; Mr. Hamilton was playing half-back for Houghton. There was still much that was unintelligible to the girls. They had mastered the mystery of the touch-down and the goal, but they could not understand the reason for the enigmatical numbers that the referee or umpire or somebody

always called out before the rush, and it was still more difficult to comprehend why once in a while, for no apparent reason, the ball was taken out of the centre, placed on a line, and deliberately kicked toward one goal, where some one always caught it and, hugging it close to his breast, started with it at full speed toward the opposite goal. But comprehend it or not, those were always the most exciting parts of the game, and it was there Mr. Hamilton made his splendid play. Somebody, they were not quite sure whether it was a Mansfield man or a Houghton man, kicked the ball (Miss Baker said she thought they called it punting). It was a fine kick anyway, and it went straight down the field to where Mr. Hamilton stood, tall and straight, watching for it. He caught it, and hugging it close with one arm, darted down the field, tacking to right and left as he ran, to avoid the men trying to seize him. Finally one succeeded in almost tackling him, but he threw him off with his disengaged arm and ran on. A second man grabbed his leg. He sprang forward on one foot and with the other hurled the man far from him. A third was more successful, and brought him to the

ground, but as he fell he flung himself loose from his grappler and was up in a second and on. Not until he had run sixty yards did they finally get him down. The Houghton men were wild. It was some time before they could be calmed down sufficiently to give the regular yell. But when the tall, good-looking officer standing nearest the drag said,

"Now men, the old yell, with Hamilton on the end, three times and again!" they gave it with a will, and the girls were all so proud to think they were acquainted with the hero. They had been almost as wild as the men, standing up on the drag and waving their flags and clapping their hands, and wanting awfully to blow their horn, but not quite daring to.

That was the climax of the game to them. Mansfield made another touch-down and another goal; the score was now twenty-four to nothing.

The sun had gone down and it was growing very cold and dark. Some of the girls were really suffering with the cold, and Mrs. Darcy thought it was hardly prudent to wait for the close of the game. So the horses were unblanketed, the girls got into their seats, wrapped their robes around them and prepared for a

start. Miss Baker had an early engagement in town, and wanted to go home by the train, and to get to the station it was necessary to pass down behind the line of Houghton men and out of the gate at the other end of the grounds. And the men, to whom the drag full of pretty girls all so enthusiastically on their side had been an object of no small interest, took off their hats all along the line as they passed, and shouted, "Good-bye!" greatly to the delight of the girls, who waved their flags in response.

They had scarcely left the field when the game was called, just as Mansfield made another touch-down and another goal, an intelligence conveyed to the parting drag by the vociferous and continued cheering.

They left Miss Baker at the station, and as they drove through the pretty village they met throngs coming from the field, and just opposite the campus the teams themselves, surrounded by a dense throng of excited and admiring men. The drag stopped to let them pass, when one of the men separated himself from the crowd and came up to them. It was Mr. Hamilton, grimy and dishevelled almost beyond recognition, but Mrs. Darcy and Lois, and all the girls that could

reach him were glad to grasp his hand and tell him how proud they were of him.

In answer to Mrs. Darcy's anxious inquiries as to how he felt after such an ordeal, he said he would come over to-morrow afternoon and accompany them to vespers, if she would permit, when he would report on his health. Of course she would permit, and all the girls were immediately devoured with envy because they couldn't appear at vespers with the foot-ball hero.

The moon had just risen as they left the foot-ball grounds, and already it was bright enough to bring out in soft relief the beautiful campus, with the picturesque buildings on one side of the road and the President's handsome house, the library buildings, and society houses on the other. Through its cold radiance, making their road almost as bright as day, they rode home, and kept themselves warm by singing college songs and shouting the praises of foot-ball.

CHAPTER X

DREAR NOVEMBER

THE game so long looked forward to was now only a thing of the past, and November was upon them in earnest.

Mrs. Darcy thought so one morning as she was sitting in her favorite seat by the window with her sewing. The great maples opposite that had been such a delight to her were bare and brown; all the glory and splendor had vanished from the earth, and instead there was only a great, gray swirling waste of waters, she thought, as the rain was driven in blinding sheets against her window, blotting out the hills and trees and even the familiar house across the street. And the gray blur was accompanied by the dismal shrieking of the wind, rising and falling in ghostly fashion.

If Mrs. Darcy had been perfectly happy she would have rather enjoyed it. It was the kind of day she always did enjoy if she could remain at home by her own fireside with a good book,

or with Lois to talk to or read to her while she sewed. But to-day she could only think of tempest-tossed ships and lost souls borne away to perdition, and every other uncanny thing possible, as the wind went howling by.

She was not perfectly happy, evidently, and she knew why. She had said to herself when she saw this was to be a shut-in day, "Now is the time for me to think it all over and decide about Lois." Lois herself was away at college and would not return before one. For four hours she would be absolutely uninterrupted; now was the time. And so she set herself to think. She had been accumulating evidence on both sides, and she determined now to sift it thoroughly and arrive at some conclusion.

There had come to her knowledge recently—she was afraid it was very opportunely—the fact that there would be a vacancy in the Harvey House after Christmas, and the Harvey House was the very one she would most like Lois to be in, if in any. For in the Harvey House was a teacher Lois ardently admired, and with whom Mrs. Darcy would feel it was a great privilege to have her associated; and in the Harvey House was Miss Baker, the Junior who had adopted

Lois as a little sister, and whose influence with Lois was of the very best.

As for Lois herself, she seemed perfectly happy in the present arrangement; but a little incident a few days before had awakened doubts with her mother, whether, after all, it might not be only seeming. It was Saturday afternoon, and Mrs. Darcy was engaged in some rather cumbrous sewing, making alterations in a dress, when two callers were announced for Lois. They were strangers, this was their first call, and Mrs. Darcy retreated to the bedroom with her sewing, which was not ornamental. She was amused in listening to Lois's rather strenuous efforts to entertain her guests, one of whom was a total stranger and the other she had met but once at a dance. Lois had not yet acquired perfect ease in playing the hostess; her sense of responsibility was a little too great, and her desire to make her guests happy and comfortable too intense. It was a cold, raw day. Her guests had come in shivering, and found the open fire very bright and cheering. To still further warm them Lois insisted on making them a cup of chocolate. It was only the work of a moment—boiling the water in her little samovar and using

evaporated cream—and her guests professed to enjoy it greatly, though Mrs. Darcy always had her doubts about such professions. To her, chocolate made with water and evaporated cream after the regular college receipt, was very poor stuff, but she would not have said so to Lois.

The smile that hovered about her lips as she listened to her little girl bustling about like a hospitable but rather fussy little housewife was not all one of amusement; there was a tender and loving pride in the dear little hostess expressed in it too.

She was not listening to the conversation, though occasionally some of it reached her ears; but quite suddenly and distinctly she heard one of the visitors say:

"Is your mother with you? Oh! how perfectly lovely! how I envy you!"

And then Lois's reply. Mrs. Darcy was listening eagerly for the sweet expressions of appreciation on Lois's part of her enviable lot. She knew they would come, of course; she had heard them before; but she was always greedy of every loving word from Lois.

Instead, Lois said: "Oh! I don't know; you

have the going home to look forward to, and think of the delight it must be to see your mother after you have been away from her so long."

Poor Mrs. Darcy! The words cut her to the quick. She did not realize that it was only a generous attempt on Lois's part to make her guest satisfied with her less enviable fate. Lois was nothing if not polite when she was playing the hostess; and sometimes her politeness led her into queer little blunders, as Mrs. Darcy herself had often observed. But now, blinded by the lurking suspicions that were ready at any such opportune moment as this to spring out and throttle her, she failed to interpret Lois's motive, and her little speech rankled. This morning it came back to her vividly to add its weight to the array of reasons that seemed to be drawing themselves up in solid phalanx on the side of going away and leaving Lois in one of the college houses.

Conscience, too, with Mrs. Darcy always a troublesome factor from its abnormal development, had arrayed itself on the side of the campus. These bleak days reminded her forcibly of her poor families in St. Mark's

whose welfare she had been in the habit of looking after for years, and whose list was added to every winter. She had left them in good hands; there was no doubt they were being well taken care of; but she began to feel that perhaps she had been shirking to come away from St. Mark's and leave all her work that used to keep her heart and hands so full. There did not seem to be any poor in Norwood, or at least she had not found them; and there were plenty of women with nothing to do but to attend to church work and charity work. In a large city like St. Mark's it was different; there was always more work than workers, and her comparatively idle life—a little reading, a little studying, a little sewing—had begun to weigh heavily on her conscience.

Yet after all, she believed most thoroughly that her first duty was to Lois; that nothing could weigh in the balance as compared with her good; that other duties might be of her own seeking, but she was a God-given trust; and the argument that finally presented itself with convincing power was that, as "those women" said, she was depriving Lois of rare opportunities for growth and rounded develop-

ment, perhaps really stunting her social and mental and moral faculties.

It was twelve o'clock, and the furious gale of a few hours before had settled down into a steady, monotonous rain, when she finally came to a definite decision that it was her duty to put Lois in the Harvey House and go back to St. Mark's; and just such a gray, leaden, monotonous color, she thought, would life be to her without Lois, unless, perchance, she had overrated her strength, and the passionate longing and bitter pain that should sweep her poor heart would resemble more the wild gale of the morning.

There were two reasons that might yet prevail against this decision; one was the possibility that some one else had already secured the vacant place in the Harvey House, and the other that giving up their rooms in the middle of the year might prove a great inconvenience to good Mrs. Harding. If so, of course they could not think of doing it without fully compensating her for the loss, and Mrs. Darcy hardly felt able to afford that. She would take measures at once to settle these uncertainties by consulting the college Registrar and Mrs.

Harding, and she was not without a lurking hope that one or the other might present insuperable obstacles to her newly determined-upon plan of action.

And of course there was the still further consideration that Lois herself might prove utterly unwilling to make any such arrangement, and if Mrs. Darcy saw that it was going to make her unhappy, she would only too gladly revoke the decision. But somehow she had but little hope of that.

Still, with these "glimmers" to sustain her, and the bitter-sweet consolation that she was doing it all for the welfare and happiness of her darling, she schooled herself to meet Lois with a placid face. She decided to say nothing to her for the present. The Yale-Harvard football game was coming off soon at Springfield, and Lois was all excitement, together with the other college girls, who were going down almost *en masse*. She would not worry her with any troublesome questions until that was over.

And then came Thanksgiving. They had planned to spend the five days' holiday in Boston. Lois had never been in Boston and was looking forward to this little glimpse of the

modern Athens with eager anticipation. So Mrs. Darcy would not broach the subject until after their return. She would not mar in any way the little trip they had been planning and looking forward to so long. Now that she was going to be separated from her so soon, she should more than ever try to make the Boston trip one of unalloyed pleasure. It was very necessary that Lois and her mother should be careful in money matters, but Mrs. Darcy determined for this once to permit herself a little extravagance. They should have a nice room in one of the nicest hotels, and if there was anything very good to be heard or seen in the way of theatre, music, or art, Lois should hear it and see it. It should be a happy time for them both to remember. And Mrs. Darcy carried out her plans perfectly.

Lois went to the ball game chaperoned by one of the Professors, and accompanied by a party of her special friends.

Mrs. Darcy had gone down to chapel with her in the morning to see the decorations. It was the day of all the year to attend chapel, everybody said. The college boarding-houses along Elm Street, as well as the houses on the

campus, had vied with each other in their decorations. In some of the houses there was not an available spot that had not been covered with either the crimson or the blue. Flags, of whichever color the owner of the room was loyal to, floated from every window. Harvard umbrellas and Yale umbrellas with H or Y in each division, Yale sofa-cushions and Harvard sofa-cushions, and gigantic foot-balls made of pop-corn and tied with red or blue ribbons dangled from window-blinds or hung suspended over the piazzas. Inside the chapel the scene was, if possible, even more brilliant. Every maiden had as many broad ribbons of crimson or of blue and bearing a conspicuous "Harvard" or "Yale" as she could possibly wear, and those who were going to the game wore great bouquets of American Beauties or red chrysanthemums or carnations, if they were Harvard girls, or enormous bunches of violets if they were Yale. And then the unusual spectacle of men at morning prayer! Every available seat filled with Houghton men, Yale men, Winter's men, or Harvard men, going to the game, but going to do duty as escorts to Fair Gale as well. Mrs. Darcy almost wished

she was going herself, there was so much excitement and enthusiasm in the air; but she enjoyed Lois's going off with her blue flag and its white "Y," and wearing as a corsage bouquet an enormous Y of violets, the gift of Miss Baker, who had invited Lois to go to the game, and was as attentive in sending flowers and looking after all small details as any Houghton or Yale escort could have been. And when Lois came back she said she had had a nice time, a very nice time; it could not have been otherwise with such a pleasant party, and they had met Mr. Hamilton there, and he had come up on the same train with them.

"But, mamma," said Lois, "I do not believe I ever want to see another foot-ball game. It was awful! It was brutal, and two or three men were dreadfully hurt. And Mr. Hamilton himself said it made him feel as if after all foot-ball was not much better than prize-fighting, and he felt almost ashamed of being a player. And I told him that I felt thoroughly ashamed of being a spectator at such an exhibition, and I should not be at all surprised if the next thing would be the introduction of the bull-fight, and we American women would gaze as complacently

on the sufferings of the poor beasts and be as enthusiastic over the brave toreadors as our Spanish sisters. And Mr. Hamilton said that it was only one step further, although he was not sure but the bull-fight was much less brutal, for there it was only man against beast, and not man against man. He said he was glad the foot-ball season was over; he believed before another season he would take time to consider whether he cared to go on with a sport that he had begun to believe was what its opponents called it—brutalizing. Of one thing he was sure; if it had to be played as it was played to-day, he would never go near the gridiron again. It was degrading."

But if the ball game had been a disappointment, the Boston trip was not. They went down the Wednesday before Thanksgiving on the afternoon train, getting in just in time for dinner at the loveliest hotel on Beacon Street, where they had what Lois called the "sweetest room." Dinner in the evening was a delight in itself, it was so like home in St. Mark's, for in Norwood they had dinner at noon, and they missed the pleasant, social evening meal. Lois's experience in hotel life had been very limited, and the

perfect appointments and delightful service of The Burlington were a pleasurable excitement in themselves.

Mrs. Darcy did not want a minute of the little visit wasted, so they called for a paper while waiting for their dinner and looked over the list of amusements. Lois should decide where they were to go. It was not difficult; Melba was to sing that very evening with the Anton Seidl orchestra of New York; it was only a question of securing seats at that late hour. The attentive waiter said he would find out at the office, and while they were still at dinner he brought them their tickets. It gave Lois a comfortable sense of luxury.

"Isn't it almost like 'Looking Backward,' mamma, just to sit in your hotel and have everything arranged for you without a bit of trouble?"

"Shall I order a carriage for you, madam?" said the obsequious waiter, as they were leaving the table, and to Lois's astonishment and almost horror, her mother said yes.

Lois took Mrs. Darcy roundly to task for her extravagance when they reached their room, but her mother only said she knew it was extrava-

gant, but she had deliberately made up her mind to be extravagant on this trip. They were going to pretend for a few days that they were rich, rich enough at least to indulge in some unusual luxuries. And Lois, who was as fond as most young girls are of luxury when she could reconcile it with her conscience, put on a pretty dress and hat and passed out through the hotel corridor with her mother, who had on what Lois called her grand air, as natural to her on some occasions as her habitual air of retiring gentleness, and got into the carriage with something of the feeling and quite the bearing of a young princess.

And the delight of the concert! The old music hall filled with handsomely dressed people giving one such a feeling of well-being to be a part of them; and Melba!

Lois had keen musical nerves and Melba's voice was ravishing to them. As she sang Lois's eyes grew wider and darker, and a rich spot of color glowed in each cheek, until people near her began to notice the radiant girl wholly absorbed in the music, and her mother, stealing an occasional glance at the glowing face, thought she had never seen her so beautiful.

A happy, excited girl rode back in the carriage with her mother. She was too happy and excited when they reached their room to think of going to sleep, or of doing anything but talk of the lovely music and the good time they were having.

The next day was just as happy. They had a late breakfast, just in time for a brisk walk through the frosty air to Edward Everett Hale's church, for they not only wanted to hear but to see a man whom they had so long loved and honored at a distance. It was not quite like Thanksgiving Day, to have to go back to the hotel for dinner, but it was a very good dinner, nevertheless.

They had arranged for a drive through Commonwealth Avenue and the Back Bay, and then out to Cambridge to see the Longfellow house, and, at least, the outside of Harvard. It was quite dark when they got back to the hotel, and they were thoroughly chilled from their long drive; so Mrs. Darcy had a fire lighted to give it a more home-like air, and as she did not think it quite the thing to go to any place of amusement on Thanksgiving Day (she said it was too much like Sunday), they concluded to provide them-

selves with some books and magazines, and spend a cozy evening in their own room. They were two people who, give them a good book, an open fire, and the society of each other, could be happy anywhere.

Friday and Saturday they heard Ysaye and the Symphony Concert, and on both Lois expended an amount of enthusiasm sufficient to have exhausted any other species of creature but a college girl. The mornings were occupied with sight-seeing and shopping—that occupation dear to every well-regulated woman's heart, and Lois and her mother were exceedingly well-regulated.

Saturday afternoon was spent in getting what Lois said was only a tantalizing glimpse of the art treasures in the museum. And then Sunday intervened and they took some much-needed rest, only going to Trinity in the morning, where the music and the service were so beautiful, but where they missed the noble presence and the inspired voice of one they had both longed to see, and attending vespers at the Arlington Street Church to hear the exquisite singing.

Monday morning there was a little more sight-seeing, a little more shopping, then home to the

hotel to put their few things into their steamer trunk, have a last cozy luncheon together, and take the afternoon train for Norwood; and it was a thoroughly tired, but supremely happy girl who returned to that historic town—not quite so fresh for study, perhaps, as she might be, but with a rich store of happy memories added to her life.

CHAPTER XI

LAST DAYS

Mrs. Darcy had deferred telling Lois of her decision until she should recover a little from her dissipation. She had been almost as happy as Lois in Boston, for she had resolutely dismissed every thought of approaching sorrow, and given herself up to the enjoyment of the present with Lois. Still, lurking in the background, there was always the consciousness of that dreadful decision so soon to be made, and now that they were home again, and a good night's sleep had seemed to thoroughly restore Lois's exhausted faculties, she knew the evil day could be put off no longer.

She had seen both Mrs. Harding and the Registrar. Mrs. Harding had said that of course they would be sorry to lose Mrs. Darcy and Lois, to whom they had become very much attached, but perhaps, after all, it was the best thing that could happen. She and her daughter had been thinking, ever since the cold

weather set in, how much they would like to close their house and spend the winter in Florida or Southern California. And if Mrs. Darcy should decide to return to St. Mark's, there would be nothing to prevent their doing so.

Of course, Mrs. Darcy regarded this as another "indication," and felt that the lurking hope she had cherished in that direction was crushed. There was no trouble with the Registrar either. She was readily given the refusal of the Harvey vacancy for ten days, and now the ten days were nearly up and there was nothing left but to tell Lois.

The opportunity came that very evening. Lois had been to an afternoon recitation with Miss Belden, and she always came home after those recitations full of Miss Belden's wise and witty sayings.

She was relating some of them now as she was dressing for supper, brushing out her curls and walking back and forth, in her excitement, from the dressing-room to the sitting-room, where her mother was seated with some Christmas work. Lois had on a pretty pink dressing sacque particularly becoming to her dark

eyes, fair complexion, and bronze hair, and as she stopped to repeat a special criticism of Miss Belden's, with the brush and one curly lock suspended in her upraised hand, Mrs. Darcy took in greedily all the details of the pretty picture, keenly conscious how few now were the times she should see it, and how often she would long to see it.

"Miss Belden doesn't like Trilby; neither does Charles Dudley Warner, mamma."

Lois and her mother had just been reading Trilby together and thoroughly enjoyed it, and so her eyes were quite big with excitement as she announced this heresy of Miss Belden's.

"Charles Dudley Warner says he feels, after reading it, as if he had been conducted through Banbury Fair by a very clever guide, who had shown him the double-headed lady and the snake-headed boy. It was very well done, but he would rather go to the National Gallery for art. What do you suppose he means, mamma?"

"Well, I suppose his idea is, that making Trilby the most miraculous songstress the world has ever heard by the agency of hypnotism, is a species of charlatanry unworthy of an artist."

"I suppose so; but I am glad you and I are

not critics, mamma. We can just enjoy a story, and don't have to stop to think whether it is good art or not. Miss Belden doesn't like Dickens either. She says there is an immense amount of bad writing in all his stories. She doesn't even like 'Bleak House,' and she thinks Esther is a most tiresome creature. She says she always has visions of her going around with a basket of cold victuals under her shawl, and insisting on feeding everybody, whether they were hungry or not."

"Well, dearie, Miss Belden is not the only one who doesn't like Dickens. She has a large and eminently respectable constituency there. And I think we can agree with her that he has much that can be called very poor writing, if it is to be measured by rules and standards; but the charm of Dickens for those who love him is something outside of all that. They agree with his critics that he caricatures human nature, and yet, like Thackeray and his children, they weep over him and laugh with him and read him again and again. For myself, I can hardly tell why I like him, any more than I can tell why I like 'Robinson Crusoe' and 'Arabian Nights' and 'Mother Goose;' and yet

I would give up a large part of literature before I would give up those classics."

"I'll tell you what I think, mamma. I think Miss Belden doesn't always believe all she says. She just says it because she thinks it will sound well, and she can make anything in the world sound well by just the way she says it. She is the most brilliant talker I ever listened to, and the wittiest. Why, she just dazzles you all the time. She ought to set up a salon, like Madame de Staël or Madame Récamier. She is every bit as witty as Madame de Staël. I don't see how it is possible for her to say so many brilliant things to so many classes, and always something new. I don't see how she does it."

"Because she draws from a well that grows fuller by drawing from it. One bright thought suggests another. If she saved them up for some grand occasion, her well would soon go dry; but the moment one occurs to her she gives it utterance, and it immediately becomes the progenitor of another."

"Yes; she said something like that herself about essay writing. She told us if we happened to have a good thought not to save it up for the end of the essay, for if we did we would be sure

to feel cramped all the way through ; but put it right down and other good thoughts would follow in its wake."

"And I don't see," said Lois, emerging once more from the bedroom where she had disappeared for a few minutes, "why Miss Belden doesn't write instead of teach. Then all her beautiful thoughts would be saved and the whole world could read them, and they wouldn't have to be wasted on just a few of us girls."

"What kind of writing could she do, do you think ?"

"Oh ! everything. Critical essays, of course, but stories, too. She tells a story better than any one I ever listened to, and she has such beautiful hands."

"Why, what has that to do with story-telling ?"

"Oh ! nothing. I was only thinking how pretty her hands looked while she was telling us a story this afternoon. They are small and white and exquisitely shaped, with the most beautiful curve at the wrist, and she has such a pretty way of using them. And that reminds me of another thing she said to-day. She said none of us liked to be told we were not any-

thing, even though we made no pretensions to be it, and in fact knew we were not, or perhaps wouldn't be for the world. We didn't like even to be told we were not bad-tempered. We would rather be considered as possessed of a good deal of temper which we keep under perfect control. She didn't like to be told she was not beautiful, though she had never made the slightest claim to beauty—and then I thought of her hands. But I can't repeat things the way she says them. I wish you could hear her, mamma. She is perfectly fascinating. Madame de Staël is no comparison. I just wish she would have a salon."

"How would you like to live in the house with her, Lois?"

"Oh! I would love it, of course. The girls in the Harvey say it is a perfect feast just to sit at the table and listen to her. And then every evening after supper, she reads to them and talks to them and tells stories, and they all adore her."

Lois answered carelessly. She was in the other room putting the finishing touches to her dress, and they were talking through the open doors. Mrs. Darcy thought this was her chance, and she seized it desperately.

"Well, I have arranged for you to go there after Christmas, if you like, and I will go back to St. Mark's."

Lois did not take it in at all. "What did you say, mamma?" She came to the sitting-room door as she spoke.

"I have arranged for you to go to the Harvey House after Christmas, if you like, and I will go back to St. Mark's."

It was a bald statement, but Mrs. Darcy could not trust herself to one extra word. She did not lift her eyes as she spoke, but gazed steadily at her work. She felt that she could not meet that wide look of pained astonishment she was sure was in Lois's eyes, or, if it should not be there, then that would be harder still.

There was a moment of breathless pause, and then Lois rushed swiftly forward and threw herself on her knees at her mother's side.

"Why, mamma! what can you mean? You are not going away and leave me!" There was no mistaking the ring of pain in Lois's voice, and her mother compelled herself to meet her eyes as her hand dropped lovingly on her curls. She had felt quite sure that Lois's first emotion would be one of pain, and she would not have had it

otherwise; but she felt almost as sure that a certain relief and joy would follow when she realized she was to have the coveted life on the campus and be in every respect like other college girls.

She had resolved that she would put it upon the ground of her own lonely, idle life in Norwood and her desire to return to St. Mark's, so that Lois might not feel constrained to reject the plan from a generous consideration for her.

So she said, very steadily:

"I have been thinking of it for a long time, darling. I think I am leading a very useless life here; don't you? All the long day while you are away, I do nothing but read a little, or sew a little, or write a few letters; and there is my work in St. Mark's, all left undone. Not even my Sunday-school class supplied with a regular teacher yet. And my missionary work, and my poor, and my working-girls' club! I think, perhaps, it is not quite right for me to come away and leave it all, there is always so much more work than there are workers to do it; and then I think, too, it will perhaps be better for you to have the full benefit of all college life can give you. And I will be so glad to

have you associated with such a woman as Miss Belden; that, in itself, will be a liberal education—and then Miss Baker is in the Harvey, and you will not feel at all lonely or homesick, and I shall feel very comfortable about you with her to look after you. I thought I would talk it over with you, dear; it is not irrevocably fixed; and if you thought it was the best thing to do, why, we might try it for the rest of the year. It will not be very long after the Christmas holidays until Easter. If we had both been here we would not take so long a trip for so short a time; but as there will be only you, of course you will come home. And then after Easter, it will be only ten weeks until the summer vacation; and so I think we will manage to get through it, and it will give us a chance to see how it works. If it proves to be all right, I will come out here and find board somewhere near the college every fall, and go back to St. Mark's at Christmas. And if it should prove to be all wrong, why, another year we can return to our first arrangement."

She had been talking on with little pauses, to give Lois a chance to say something, but Lois had not uttered a word. She had been almost

dazed at first, and now she was slowly gathering from her mother's words that what she had sometimes feared was true, after all. Her mother had been lonely, and had suffered while she was having such a good time, and oblivious to it all. Her first wild impulse, to cling to her mother and rebel at the thought of the separation, she was trying to subdue, and in the meantime she dared not trust herself to speak. She was saying to herself: "I will be brave for dear mamma's sake. All that horrid girl said was true. I have been selfish and thoughtless. Of course it must be a terribly dreary life for mamma away from St. Mark's, where she is so useful and so loved. Other girls live without their mothers, and so of course I can." And then a swift realizing sense of what life without her mother would be rushed over her and almost swept her from her stern resolve not to let that precious mother know what an agony it would be to give her up.

So she said nothing, because she could not, but sat with her eyes fixed on her clasped hands, that her mother might not be able to read them, until her mother stopped and waited, and said finally:

"Well, Lois?"

Then she said, in a low, unsteady voice:

"Have you really been so lonely and unhappy, mamma? Oh! how selfish, selfish I have been!" And with a great rush of tears and sobs she buried her face in her mother's lap.

But that was not at all the idea Mrs. Darcy had intended to convey, and she was shocked that in her desire to make it easy for Lois, she had so far overshot the mark.

"Oh! no, no, Lois darling!" she exclaimed, as she lifted the weeping girl to her lap and held her close.

"You know I could never be unhappy where you are, nor lonely. I was only trying to decide what might be best for us both, and I thought we could experiment on the rest of this year: but if it is going to make you unhappy, there is not the least reason why we should not remain just as we are."

Lois lifted her head with one big, convulsive sob that she determined should be her last, and smiled through her tears. A rather forlorn little smile that came nearer undermining Mrs. Darcy's hardly-maintained fortitude than even the tears that preceded it.

But Lois was quite determined now. She

would be brave and accept her mother's plan, and no one should ever know what it cost her. So she kept on smiling perseveringly, while she said, in a voice that was a little tremulous in spite of herself,

"I think you are quite right, mamma. It certainly cannot be the best kind of a life for you, and I would be a great baby indeed if I could not stay away from you a few weeks at a time; and anyway I think we had better try the experiment. But," she added, "how can I get into the Harvey in the middle of the year?"

Then Mrs. Darcy explained about the vacancy, and also how it seemed rather providential, for the Hardings wanted to close their house and go south for the winter.

"Well, that settles it," said Lois, who, like her mother, would have vehemently disdained any subjection to superstition, but who, nevertheless, was strongly influenced by anything that looked like "providential indications."

They sat for the hour that intervened till supper time, with no light but the firelight, Lois in a low chair by her mother's side, and hand in hand they talked it all over. Mrs. Darcy

told Lois of her plan that they should both go home to spend the holidays. It had not been their original intention on account of the distance and the expense, but as Mrs. Darcy would, at any rate, be going immediately after, they might as well go together. It would be such a pleasure to Lois to spend Christmas in her old home among her old friends, and as Lois said, she could see her mother settled in her new home.

Mrs. Darcy had written some time before to her old friends the Coltons, and had heard from them that if she wanted to return to St. Mark's they would only be too glad to have her with them. So although she could not go back to her own little home, she was not to be at the mercy of a forlorn boarding-house.

As they talked things began to look a little brighter to Lois. She had the most elastic and most optimistic of spirits always, and Mrs. Darcy, who felt the little hand trembling in hers, and heard the frequent quiver in the voice when they began to talk, was glad to notice the hand grow quieter and the voice firmer as they went on, until finally there was almost a ring of the old gay tone as she pictured the surprise of her St. Mark's friends when she should walk in

on them. And then Mrs. Darcy began to paint life at the Harvey for her, and told her about her pleasant room, a single one on the second floor and very near Miss Baker.

Things began to look not quite so dreadful to Lois. Suddenly she asked: "Did you know about this all the time we were in Boston, mamma?"

"Yes, dear."

"And was that the reason," keenly, "that you were so extravagant and determined to have a good time?"

"That was the very reason, darling."

Lois was silent a full minute; then she looked up with a long-drawn sigh, pressing the hand that she held to her cheek:

"Oh! you are the loveliest mother!"

It was only two weeks until the Christmas holidays, and there was much to be done—Christmas presents to be finished, packing all the dainty furnishings of their little home to be transferred to the Harvey House, besides their preparations for the journey to St. Mark's. The days fairly flew, and before either of them could realize it, they had come to the last evening to be spent together in Norwood.

Everything had been carried down to the Harvey in the morning, and Lois and her mother had spent the day in arranging the little room, and Lois could not but confess it looked very dainty and pretty and even homelike. Miss Belden had expressed her pleasure at having Lois as a member of her family, and Miss Baker had gone into transports of delight at the prospect of having her "little sister" right under her wing.

Now they were alone together in their old room, bare and desolate, with the curtains gone from the windows, pictures and hangings all down, no divan, tea table, bookcase, or pretty fixings of any kind. The piano, a rented one, still stood there and a couple of easy chairs belonging to the room left them a comfortable place to sit. Their faithful companion in joy and sorrow, the fire, was still left to them, and outside the snow was softly falling, veiling the windows and filling the room with a beautiful subdued light that quite took the place of muslin draperies. The snow was of the soft, clinging kind that piled high on every branch and twig, and hung the evergreens near their windows full of great white tassels. It was fast

transforming the bleak, hard earth into a place of soft, white beauty.

Lois was restless. The influence of "last things" was full upon her and she was finding it hard to keep back the fast-springing tears. As for Mrs. Darcy, there was a pain in her heart too deep and keen for any words, that left her pale and languid. Lois went to the piano and played and sang softly "Jerusalem the Golden." It was a great favorite with both of them, and insensibly the inspiring words relieved the strain tugging at the heartstrings of each. When she had finished, she came and sat down beside her mother in the fast-gathering twilight, and they fell to talking softly and cheerfully of the happy times they had spent together in that dear room and in old Norwood.

After supper there was still a little packing to do, last things to put into their trunks, for they were to leave early in the morning. But by eight o'clock everything was packed, and they were in their old places before the fire, Lois on a low stool at her mother's feet, her head on her lap. Their talk was now of St. Mark's and the friends they were soon to see,

mingled with many little directions and admonitions to Lois as to her life away from her mother. Some of it only about the care of her room and her clothing, for so far Lois had been obliged to take but little thought about either; and some of it about more essential matters. Loving guidance that Lois could refer to when questions of principle or conscience should arise. They had many things to say to each other. They seemed to realize that this was their real farewell; there would be so much to do and so many to see in St. Mark's, it would leave them but little time for each other. They had not heeded the flight of time, but when Mrs. Darcy noticed that it was long past ten o'clock, she said, "And now, Lois, the song I love so well before we go to bed." And in her pure, beautiful voice, her mother's pride, grown sweeter and stronger by the cultivation of the last three months, she sang:

"For thee, O dear, dear Country,
Mine eyes their vigils keep;
For very love beholding
Thy happy name, they weep.
The mention of thy glory
Is unction to the breast,
And medicine in sickness,
And love and life and rest.

"Oh! sweet and blessed Country,
The home of God's elect,
Oh! sweet and blessed Country,
That eager hearts expect!
Jesus in mercy bring us
To that dear land of rest;
Who art, with God the Father
And Spirit, ever blest."

The memory of that last evening together often came back to them both in sad hours that were awaiting them. Lois went to sleep tight clasped in her mother's arms, but when her light, regular breathing indicated that she was really sleeping, her mother kissed her softly and put her away, and then, turning from her, yielded at last to the flood of bitter tears that had been so long pent up and so long gathering force there was no resisting longer their overwhelming tide.

CHAPTER XII

LIFE ON THE CAMPUS

THE Christmas holidays were over—lovely holidays, full of such good times at home with their old friends, yet haunted for both Lois and her mother by the shadowy spectre of the separation that was to come at their close.

And now the separation had taken place. They had both borne up bravely, each determined to do so for the sake of the other; but Lois, rolling swiftly toward Norwood on the "Limited," and her mother, alone in the pleasant room she called her own at Mrs. Colton's, were both going through such a struggle as must leave its impress for all time on their hearts and lives.

Lois felt herself in the grasp of an irresistible fate bearing her swiftly on, away from all that was dearest to her on earth. For the moment she would gladly have given up college and all it meant for her in the future to be back with that dear mother in dear St.

Mark's. And Mrs. Darcy, now that the great wrench had been made, was left so weak, physically and morally, that she was ready to yield all her high resolves, the result of weeks of calm deliberation, and had wild thoughts of taking the next train and following Lois.

There were two things that probably helped them both to live through that first awful strain. For Lois, it was the horror of letting others know the agony she was suffering, and there was quite a party of Gale girls on board the train before whom she made desperate efforts to keep up the semblance of cheerfulness.

With Mrs. Darcy, it seemed even more imperative that she should not darken, by the shadow of her own grief, the home that had been so kindly opened to receive her; and though the effort was almost a superhuman one, she did achieve calmness and almost cheerfulness when next she met the family circle.

It seemed odd to Lois not to be going up the familiar Elm Street, and it gave her another sickening sensation of heart-sinking to turn into the college grounds with a long line of other carriages. Every in-coming train brought its quota of returning girls, and the roll

of carriages over the campus asphalt was unceasing.

It would be strange, too, not to meet all the familiar girls at Mrs. Waters's, to whom she had become much attached in the short three months of their association, and she wondered if she were going to be equal to the ordeal of that entrance into a strange house.

But Miss Belden met her at the door and received her so kindly, and introduced her to the house-mother, who gave her so warm a welcome that she already began to feel a little lessening of the pain at her heart, when somebody came flying through the hall and clutched her delightedly, exclaiming:

"Why Lois, you dear little sister, when did you come?" It was Miss Baker, of course, and she took Lois to her room and began to unfasten her cloak and take off her hat.

But when Lois saw the familiar furnishings so closely associated with her life with her mother, in the dear little sitting-room on Elm Street, and felt the friendliness of Miss Baker's ministrations, it was too much for her. Her long effort at self-control relaxed, and with a cry, "O mamma, mamma!" she threw herself

into Miss Baker's arms and gave way to uncontrollable sobs and tears. She could have fallen into no better hands. The first violent paroxysm of her grief over, Miss Baker drew her down beside her on the divan, and with her arm around her, and Lois's head on her shoulder, talked to her so sweetly and soothingly that soon Lois was weeping quietly and feeling somehow not quite so wretched, now that tears had relieved the overcharged heart.

Lois was not a girl to indulge in the luxury of woe, and as soon as she could, she controlled even the silent weeping.

"Oh! what would I have done if you had not been here, Miss Baker?" she said, tremulously, from behind the screen, where she was trying to bathe away the traces of her tears.

"I think my heart would have broken if I had been all alone when I came in and saw all these reminders of dear mamma."

"I am so glad I was here, little sister. But you must not call me Miss Baker, you must call me Margaret; now that we are going to be in the same house, and your room is so near mine that I foresee I shall be in here so much as to become an awful nuisance."

Miss Baker had determined that for the present, at least, she should see that Lois was left to herself as little as possible, and so prepared her for the friendly surveillance. But Lois had a quiet strength of character that her friends did not always give her credit for, she seemed so young and gentle. Her mother recognized it and had counted on it to sustain her in times of home-sickness or mother-sickness. The one outburst of feeling and the free course to her tears had done her good, and now she was determined on no backward glances. Her life should be in the present duty, looking forward to the swiftly-gliding weeks to restore her to her mother.

Miss Baker had fears for her health when she witnessed that first overwhelming paroxysm of grief, and even thought of writing to Mrs. Darcy that she did not believe Lois would be able to bear the separation. But when she saw her taking up her daily duties cheerfully, and soon with unfeigned interest in her new life, she dismissed all foreboding and concluded that Lois was like other girls; if her feelings were intense they were as volatile also. In fact, Lois lost just a little ground with this friend, because she had not

continued to mourn longer or certified her constancy by going into a morbid state. She did Lois a little injustice, however. There was nothing volatile or inconstant in her nature. She was intense, but there was much of good sense in her composition, and she was determined to make the best of the inevitable.

It was true also that she was gifted with a large portion of the elasticity of youth, and a sunny nature that turned as naturally to the bright side of life as the flower to the sun, added to a rare reticence that could not reveal even to her dearest friend, the longing and grief that came near overwhelming her at times.

So she entered heartily into the life of the campus, and it was not long before there was no more popular girl in the Harvey than Lois, in demand at all the teas and spreads and various impromptu entertainments, until Miss Baker began to feel a little jealous that she saw so little of her "little sister."

Lois was true to her first love, however, and if other girls and society events claimed her time so that she saw little of Margaret, as she called her now, she yet held her place in her affections unapproached, and she managed to

slip into her room every night for a little talk, even if sometimes it had to be after lights were out.

She had been so fortunate as to have a seat assigned to her at Miss Belden's table, and her keen enjoyment in her brilliant table-talk had not passed unnoticed by Miss Belden, who often invited her to her room, where she revelled in books and pictures, and the charm of friendly intercourse with the gifted woman.

She saw a good deal too of the old girls from Mrs. Waters's. Isabel rushed into her room the day after her arrival, exclaiming in her usual italics :

"Oh! you dear, darling Lois! We do miss you and your mother so much; it is too lonely at our house. How is Mrs. Darcy, and why did she go back to St. Mark's? I just thought you and your mother could never live apart."

That was touching on a sore point with Lois. She had not been able to overcome a little hurt feeling that St. Mark's should have proved more of a necessity for her mother than she. It seemed so unlike her mother, that she should be more unhappy separated from her home and associations than from the child in whom her

whole life had seemed to be merged. But she never dwelt on that point; she never even consciously recognized it to herself, so she answered loyally and sincerely:

"Mamma would do anything that she thought best for me, and she thought it was best for me to have some experience in independent college life."

"Oh! of course; but we miss you so much," said Isabel, "and I have no one to study Greek with, and no more little lunches or Sunday evening sings in your room."

"Oh! don't, Isabel; don't recall any of those dear old times! Wait until I am a little used to it." And Isabel, seeing the tears fast gathering, mentally scolded herself for a horrid old blunderer, and hastened to retrieve her mistake by begging Lois to come out for a walk.

It was a crisp January day, and they walked away out to the Camelot River bridge, and stood there looking down the frozen river to bleak Mt. Hoaryhead, when a party of Houghton students came by in a trap, and one of them bowed in a quick, surprised way, and after the trap had passed, stopped it and got out and came back to speak to them. It was Mr. Hamil-

ton, and he was delighted to see Lois and showed it plainly. He knew her mother was not to come back with her, and that she was to be at the Harvey. Poor Lois! it was another trial to her still unsteady nerves to have him inquire for her mother so kindly and express such sincere regret that she had not returned. He was quick to see the almost imperceptible quiver of the sensitive chin and the sudden droop of the eyelids, and drawing off the fur glove he had just put on, he grasped her hand with a quick, warm pressure, as he said, hastily:

"Good-bye. I must not keep the boys waiting. May I come to vespers on Sunday?"

Lois could only nod her assent; she did not dare even lift her eyes; his quick sympathy had nearly completed her discomfiture, and to cover her confusion he said gayly to Isabel as he lifted his hat to them both:

"And may I bring a friend of yours with me, Miss Arden?"

"I shall be very happy," said Isabel, "only please remember, I am not at the Harvey."

And then to give Lois time to fully recover, she said, as he walked off,

"Isn't he nice? I'll never forget as long as I

live that run he made and how grand he looked, darting in and out among all those men trying to down him."

"Is he nicer than Mr. Beacher?" said Lois with an attempt at playfulness, and to show Isabel she was all right again.

"I believe he is, a little," said Isabel, slowly and reflectively. "Mr. Beacher does not play foot-ball, you know, but," enthusiastically, "he does sing divinely."

After that Lois saw a good deal of Mr. Hamilton. He came to vespers the following Sunday and on many Sundays, and sometimes appeared at the Harvey on the half-holidays between.

Lois began to remember something her mother had said to her on that last night they were together in Norwood.

"You have always been a little girl, Lois, but now people will begin to consider you a young lady because you are in college, and it may be possible you will receive attentions from young men. It is always nice to have pleasant friends, but you must be careful not to let the friendship grow too devoted. If you see it is verging that way, you must use a little womanly tact to prevent it."

She had Mr. Hamilton distinctly in mind, for

she had noticed his evident liking for Lois, and although Mrs. Darcy admired and liked him very much, she felt Lois was entirely too young to be getting interested in any one. Lois probably did not think of him then, but she remembered her mother's words now, and felt a little troubled, wondering whether her mother would think him "too attentive." She liked him very much, and she would be very sorry to have his visits discontinued. Twice lately he had been over in the afternoon, and they had spent an hour or two skating on Paradise Lake, and Lois thought it the finest sport she had ever had in her life.

That was one of Lois's new experiences—learning to skate. There had never been ice enough in St. Mark's for her to learn, but there was plenty of it here. Lois had made a beginning before Christmas, but it was the merest beginning. They returned from the holidays to find the ice in splendid condition, and her friends, especially Isabel and Miss Baker, who were very anxious to have her learn, took her out for a little while almost every day. But she made slow progress.

"It is always so in learning to skate," Miss

Baker assured her, "you go on struggling for a long time and seemingly making no advancement, when suddenly it comes to you, and you know how to skate."

It had not "come" to Lois yet, when one Wednesday afternoon Mr. Hamilton called with his skates on his arm.

"I have come to see if you would not like to go down to Paradise for a little skate," was his greeting as she entered the room.

"But I don't know how to skate," objected Lois.

"Then I will teach you. You have skates?"

"Yes," reluctantly, for Lois did not quite like to exhibit her awkwardness and ignorance of the beautiful accomplishment to Mr. Hamilton. But she was persuaded, and a new sensation was added to her life, a new sense, she almost thought, as she felt herself flying over the ice.

The girls who had been trying to teach her could only show her or feebly attempt to hold her up while she made awkward little strokes. Mr. Hamilton cut a strong, smooth stick from a tree by the lake, and giving one end to Lois and telling her to do nothing but keep her ankles firm, he took her flying over the ice. She began to discern some of the pleasures of skating.

Afterward, with her hands crossed and resting in his so that she would have a firm support, he showed her how to strike out, and after a few awkward first efforts, she found that by leaning slightly forward and resting a little on that firm support, her feet seemed to lose that irresistible tendency to fly from under her at all angles; she could control their movements, and suddenly Lois found herself skating, really skating. It had "come" to her at last, and it seemed to come with a rush. In a few moments she was gliding from side to side in long, sweeping curves, still resting on Mr. Hamilton's hands for support, but more and more lightly as she rapidly acquired skill, and feeling like a bird on the wing, in the rapid rush through the keen air and swift gliding over the smooth ice.

There were many of Lois's friends on the ice, among them Miss Baker, to whom she introduced Mr. Hamilton, and hand in hand, with Lois between them, they sailed up and down the glassy lake until Lois, tired, or pretending to be, sat down on a log to rest, and sent Mr. Hamilton and Margaret on a swift skate up the river.

They came back in a little while, and, taking Lois again, skated up to the landing, where Mr.

Hamilton took off their skates, and Lois found she could barely stand on her feet, much less walk, and had to hobble most of the way home, with Mr. Hamilton and Margaret on either side to assist her. But that was a part of the frolic, and Lois, who really suffered for a while, made more of a frolic out of it because Mr. Hamilton looked so grave, fearing he had strapped her skates too tightly (which he had no doubt done), and perhaps injured her feet. The return of circulation was painful, but it was all right by the time they had reached the Harvey, and Mr. Hamilton plucked up courage to ask if he might come again Saturday afternoon; the ice might not last, and he thought Miss Darcy ought to make the most of it, so as not to lose what she had already learned.

Lois said "yes" a little doubtfully. It had been glorious sport, and she longed for more of it, but it was then she began to wonder if that was not being "too attentive," and how she was to manage to have it any different. She would write her mother all about it and get her advice, and with that she dismissed the subject, and was quite ready to enjoy looking forward to Saturday with a good conscience.

CHAPTER XIII

A STERN NECESSITY

THE ice was softening on top, the girls said at the dinner table on Saturday; perfectly safe, but not very good skating. Lois was very much afraid she was not to have her skate after all. She had entirely forgotten her scruples, and was only anxious lest Mr. Hamilton should conclude it was too warm for skating and not come.

But he came, of course, and when Lois told him the condition of the ice, proposed that they should go down and investigate. They found it certainly very soft on the top on the side of the lake nearest the college, but the attendant assured them it was only a top thaw, perfectly safe, and better skating on the other side. Still Mr. Hamilton thought it better to investigate for himself before risking Lois on it, and putting on his skates, he skated swiftly across and back again.

"It's very good on the other side, Miss

Darcy. Don't try to skate here; just let me pull you over."

There were very few on the ice, and they had the lake almost to themselves—a few small boys, of course, and a very few college girls—none of Lois's friends, and not enough altogether to obstruct the skating in the least.

Lois thought the ice better than on Wednesday. It was just soft enough to cut in a little and give her skates a firm hold, which is sometimes an advantage to a beginner still a little uncertain on her ankles. She had a splendid lesson and was rapidly learning how to skate alone, almost too rapidly, Mr. Hamilton thought. There were so few spectators, and none very near, she was not afraid of ridicule, and so ventured more and more until she could manage quite alone the long, graceful strokes she had already found easy with Mr. Hamilton's supporting hand.

Then he proposed they should go up the river, and the motion was so exhilarating and so delightful that they went further than they intended, and when they turned to come back and Mr. Hamilton consulted his watch, they found it was half-past five, and with all possible haste

Lois would be hardly able to get back in time for supper. The moon, well past its first quarter, had made it so light they had not recognized it was late.

They found the lake entirely deserted; even the small boy had gone home to supper, and, what was much worse, the ice on the college side was all under water. The softening process had gone on rapidly during the afternoon under the combined influence of the sun's rays and the skating, and now they had a sheet of water to be crossed before they could reach land, unless they should skate clear back to the river, land there, and have a long walk home. That would make them very late, and besides Mr. Hamilton thought Miss Darcy had had exercise enough for one afternoon.

He thought rapidly, and begging Lois to remain where she was a moment, he glided off toward the shore, while Lois held her breath, for it looked exactly as if he was skating right into the lake. But he was back in a moment. The water had come up over the top of his skates and over his shoes, but the ice beneath was quite firm.

"There is only one way, Miss Darcy, and I hope you will forgive the necessity."

He did not wait for the objection she was sure to make, but stooped and lifted her in his arms as if she had been a child. Startled out of all perception of the necessity of the act, Lois cried indignantly, struggling to free herself:

"Put me down this moment, Mr. Hamilton; how dare you!"

He did not put her down, but looked up in her indignant, flushed face seriously.

"It is really the only way, Miss Darcy. I'm sorry, but if you will let me try it, I will have you down on the other side in a moment."

Perhaps he did not mind the delay her remonstrance occasioned. At least Lois realized that she was only prolonging her embarrassment, and she replied, not quite so graciously as she might,

"Very well; be quick, please."

In the few minutes that it required to clear the water, set her down gently on land, and remove her skates and his own, Lois had time to reflect that it was very silly of her to "make a fuss;" it really was the only thing to do. So she tried to thank Mr. Hamilton very cordially,

and expressed great concern for his wet feet, at which he only laughed.

But her manner all the way up to the house was either shy or offended, Mr. Hamilton could not quite decide which; but his bright, laughing companion of the afternoon was gone.

Just before they reached the Harvey, he stopped.

"Miss Darcy," he said, "if I have offended you I hope you will forgive me; it really seemed the only way to me."

"Oh! no," said Lois, quickly, "I am not at all offended. Of course, it was the only way. It was very kind of you and I thank you very much. It was very silly of me to object, but I was so taken by surprise."

"Now," thought Lois, "he will not think I attach any importance to it one way or the other, and I hope I have effaced the impression I must have made by my fussing."

She gave him her hand at parting, and hoped he would not take cold from his wet feet; but he went away with the feeling that they were not on quite such pleasant terms as they had been an hour ago down the river.

"I wonder if mamma would think I managed

that with womanly tact," thought Lois; and somewhow she was not quite sure that she would.

She came in to supper late, with such magnificent color that the girls could not refrain from commenting on it. The skating easily accounted for it to them, but Lois thought it did not entirely account for the hot feeling that rushed over her whenever she recalled Mr. Hamilton's temerity and her own "absurdity," as she called it.

If Lois was offended with Mr. Hamilton, she had ample time to recover from it before she saw him again. He did not appear at vespers, and there was no more skating. The ice continued to thaw, and a warm rain setting in left the lake as clear as on a summer day. The rain ended up in a heavy snow that made fine sleighing. Lois had never had a sleigh-ride, and now she was hoping there might come some chance of trying this other delightful recreation of a Northern winter. In the meantime she was very busy, and though her mother seemed to her never out of her thoughts, and she had some sad and lonely hours, there was really very little time for her to stop and think whether she was unhappy or not. Her mother's

long, sweet letters came regularly twice a week, and hers went just as regularly to her mother, full of everything she thought could possibly interest her in her campus life.

There was never any sadness in her mother's letters. They were full of what she was doing, accounts of Lois's friends, happy looking forward to their meeting, and loving advice for Lois.

Lois always felt like having "a little weep" when she read them, but that was not because they were sad. It was partly, Lois believed, because they were not sad; because her mother was so happy without her; but principally because they made her long so to see her mother.

The Harvey was in great excitement over the play to be given in the gymnasium. It was an event that could only come once in three years to each house, for only one play at a time was permitted in "the Gym," and the nine houses had to take their turns.

The parts had been assigned for the play, and rehearsals had been going on some time before Christmas; so, of course, Lois did not expect to have any part in it, even if being only a Freshman had not rather disqualified her.

But Miss Wilkins, the "leading lady," was taken ill during the Christmas holidays, and was not able to return at the opening of school. They waited for her a little while, and then received word from her mother that she would not be able to return before the spring term—possibly not then.

There was great consternation in the dramatic club and the manager was in despair. All her best talent had been assigned, and they seemed to have the parts best suited to them. She did not know where to look for a "Miss Hardcastle." To borrow one from another house, as some one suggested, was to confess the Harvey inadequate in resources. It was not to be thought of for a moment.

It was at this juncture that Miss Baker, who was to play the part of "young Mr. Harlow," suggested Lois as "Miss Hardcastle." She had seen her play the part of "Mrs. Somers," in Howells's "Mouse-Trap," which the girls at Miss Waters's had given in the fall, and she told the manager what a success she had made of it.

The stage manager knew Miss Darcy only slightly, and felt very dubious, but if she was

willing to try the part on approval, and would not feel hurt if, after a trial, the manager did not consider her adapted to it, she would like to try her, and appointed the next evening for a rehearsal of the first act.

Lois hardly knew whether to attempt it or not. She dearly loved "dramatics," and nothing would delight her more than to be able to take a part in the play; but to take a leading rôle, new and almost unknown in the Harvey, or to attempt to take it and fail, seemed too frightful.

But Margaret persuaded her, and she set to work to commit her lines for the next evening.

The stage manager was delighted with the result. Here was as good a "Miss Hardcastle" as she had lost, perhaps better, and Lois was written down for the part. When Isabel heard of it, her astonishment knew no bounds.

"Why, Lois Darcy! I never saw a girl like you. Such luck! Do you suppose anybody would ever go and get sick to let me have a part in a play? Never; and the leading part, too. But that's just the way it will be with you all through college. Everything will play right into your hands. I'd be willing to ven-

ture almost anything that you will play on the basket-ball match, after all."

Lois and Isabel had neither of them been chosen on the team, and it had been a great disappointment to them both; but Lois was one of the substitutes, or second team, and of course, there was a possibility that she might play. It was beginning to be a generally received opinion among Lois's friends, that there was nothing she could not do, and do it a little better than any one else; and, as Isabel said, the opportunities came to Lois when they never would to others. Whoever before heard of any one being invited to join the Glee Club, and a Freshman at that; and to cap it all, everybody said she was a "prod" in her studies; it was really too much for one girl!

"And the worst of it all is, it doesn't spoil you a bit, Lois. Now, if you were only vain and proud and stuck up, I could be envious of you with a good conscience; but as it is, I am denied even that small comfort."

"Well, keep on, Isabel, and I shall soon be as vain and proud as you wish; or is this all bitter irony?"

And then Isabel said, "Oh! do let me help

you with your costumes. That will be the next best thing to being in it myself."

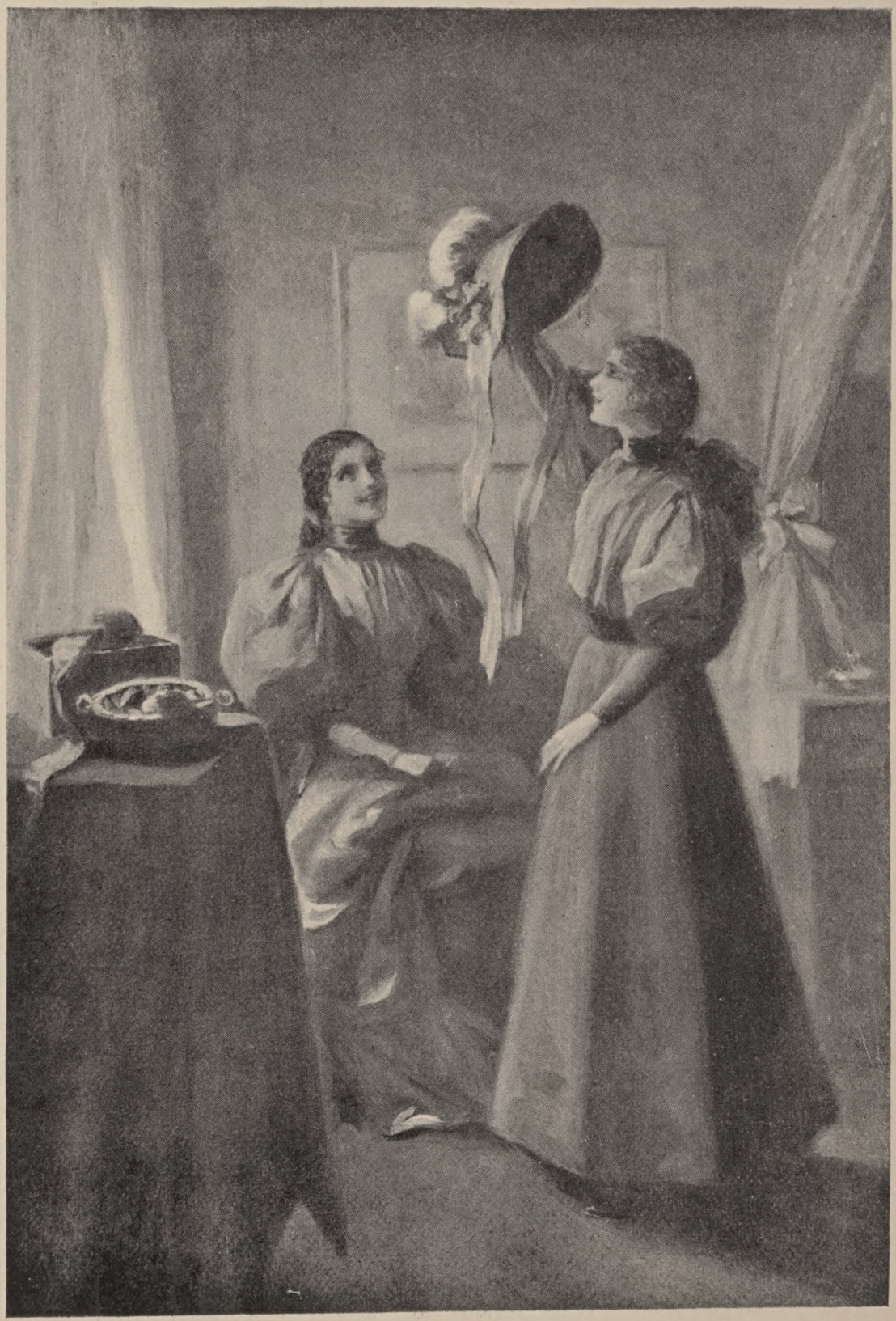
And for the next two weeks they both spent every spare moment devising two dainty costumes to be worn on the great occasion—which goes to prove that Isabel was as thoroughly unselfish, and as far from envious as possible.

The night of the play arrived. Like all college functions, it began promptly at seven o'clock; for the girls knew that if they should be in the most thrilling part of the fifth act when ten o'clock came, lights would be turned out.

The audience was brilliant in the extreme. No men, of course, but every invited guest in the prettiest and brightest costume her wardrobe afforded.

The running gallery was divided off into boxes by pretty screens, and there the most elaborate dressing was displayed. Instead of chairs in the boxes, there were piles of sofa cushions, and gracefully reclining on these were fair forms gorgeously arrayed; and it might well be mistaken for a scene from some Oriental court where no men might profane the presence.

The curtain went up and displayed a very



"DO LET ME HELP YOU WITH YOUR COSTUMES"

(See page 198)

pretty and quaint stage-setting not at all amateurish; and indeed they had such a competent stage manager that there was very little that was amateurish in the whole play.

"Mrs. Hardcastle" was as delightfully absurd as Mrs. Green herself could have been, when she played it for the first time before our London ancestors in the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden. "Mr. Hardcastle" was by turns the genial host and the irate and outraged old English gentleman. "Tony Lumpkins" was inimitable. Indeed, it was a revelation to some of the spectators to know they had such dramatic genius in their midst as "Tony" displayed. The by-play between him and "Miss Neville" was beyond criticism.

"Mr. Marlow" and "Mr. Hastings" were not only well up in their lines, but they were resplendent in wigs and costumes imported from Somerfield—particularly in the last scene, where one in blue satin and silver, and the other in pink and gold, were gorgeous to the last degree. "Sir Charles" and all the minor parts were exceedingly well taken, and the quickness with which the scenes were set and the costumes changed, won golden opinions for the management.

But after all, the triumph of the evening was Lois. The Harvey girls had managed to keep a profound secret what play was to be given, and very few of Lois's friends even knew that she was to take part. They were out in force because she had invited them, and invitations were most eagerly sought; and the program was the first intimation most of them had received that she was to be "Miss Hardcastle."

When she appeared in the first scene, in the quaintly elaborate costume that she and Isabel had devised, and that old "Mr. Hardcastle" calls "Frenchy," she was greeted with quite a storm of applause, won by the pretty picture she made in her short-waisted, narrow-skirted pink brocade dress, with elbow sleeves, long silk mitts, and pink shoes, pointed, high-heeled, and buckled, and her dress quite short enough to display them. The dress was cut low in the neck, and a rich black lace scarf was draped over her shoulders, and on her head was a wonder of a bonnet. That bonnet was certainly a work of genius. Lois's large leghorn flat had been used as a foundation. A tiny crown of buckram, covered with black velvet, such as our great-great-grandmothers wore, was built on at

the back, over which curled and nodded a bunch of ostrich plumes, after the fashion of those same grand dames. It was brought down at the sides and tied under the chin with pink ribbons, and a broad black velvet facing, and a wide pink bow nestling on the powdered locks, made it irresistibly becoming to the dark eyes and pink cheeks framed within, as she tripped on the stage on her high heels, a little pink reticule dangling from her arm, and with all the airs and graces of an eighteenth century belle.

In the second scene she appeared in the housewife's dress, that "Miss Hardcastle" wears in the evenings to please her father, on condition that she be permitted to dress as a lady of fashion in the mornings; and it was hard to tell whether the lady of fashion or the little housewife was most charming. A short quilted petticoat of scarlet satin, with corsage and panniers of flowered chintz, a tiny white apron and muslin cap, scarlet shoes and hose, and a big bunch of keys at her belt, completed the costume. Another round of applause greeted her second appearance, and put Lois on her mettle to deserve it for something more than her costumes; and a sweeter, more natural "Kate

Hardcastle," full of arch coquetry and bewitching wiles, would be hard to find.

The curtain rang down for the last time, amid the enthusiastic clapping of hands, which was so prolonged that it was necessary to ring up again, revealing a pretty tableau—"Kate Hardcastle" in her quaint scarlet and white costume, in the act of giving her hand to "Mr. Harlow," resplendent in blue satin and silver and lace, while all the others stood grouped about them in quaint or gorgeous costumes, according to their parts in the play.

And then came that always-dreaded announcement, "Lights will be out in five minutes," and as at the touch of a magician's wand, the brilliant audience and the brilliant stage alike vanished, the gymnasium was left cold and dark, and the great Harvey play, long talked of beforehand, and long to be remembered afterward, was over.

CHAPTER XIV

A CONCERT AT HOUGHTON

With rehearsing for the play and glee club practice growing more frequent as they were beginning to work in earnest for the grand spring concert, and with every moment she could spare from study and practice and rehearsing and costuming put in on basket-ball (for if the Freshmen had any hope of beating the Sophomores in the grand game at the close of the term they would have to work for it, as the Sophomores had the advantage of a whole year's play), with everything in college rushing, Lois had little time to miss Mr. Hamilton. And yet she did miss him a little, and wondered if she had driven him away by seeming offended. If so, she was very sorry. Sometimes she thought it was possible he had taken cold from getting his feet wet on Paradise that day; and if so she was still more sorry, and wished she could find out. But if there was no reason at all for his long absence, but mere

indifference, then she was ready to be quite as indifferent as he, and didn't care if he never came—which looks as if she did care a little.

It was four weeks since she had seen him. The sleighing was at its height, but Lois had not yet had a ride, when one morning she received a letter post-marked Houghton. She did not know the writing, but she could readily guess whom it might be from, and she tore it open precipitately. It was from Mr. Hamilton, as she had supposed, and he told her that he had been very anxious to invite her to attend a concert given at Houghton that week, but he had not quite known how to manage it. If her mother had been there to chaperone her, there would have been no difficulty, of course. He thought he had arranged it, however, if he had her permission to do so, and if she would cooperate with him to secure the required Registrar's permission and the chaperone. Mr. Beacher and Mr. Markham would like to invite her two friends, Miss Arden and Miss Baker, and if she would invite one or two teachers (he thought two would be pleasanter and just fill the sleigh), everything could be very satisfactorily arranged.

Lois was wildly excited. If she had been cherishing any hard feeling toward Mr. Hamilton it vanished on the spot; in fact, she did not even remember that it had ever existed. The idea of a sleighing party made up of her best friends, and to Houghton, was better than she had dreamed of. She ran at once to Margaret's room to communicate the glad intelligence, and Margaret was almost as delighted as Lois. She liked Mr. Markham, and although sleighing was no novelty to her, it was always a grand pleasure, and to attend a concert in Houghton was the height of felicity to a Gale college girl.

"But whom will you invite for chaperone?" Margaret asked, when they had discussed all the delightful details, including the dresses they should wear.

"Why, Miss Belden, of course," answered Lois, promptly.

"I don't believe she will go. She doesn't like chaperoning and she doesn't like sleigh-riding, and she doesn't believe in Gale girls going to Houghton."

"O dear! that's too bad! But I shall ask her anyway, and I shall invite her 'crush,' too, and then perhaps she'll go."

"Why, Lois Darcy! I am shocked to hear you talk of Miss Belden's 'crush'; such reverence as you pretend for Miss Belden, too."

"I don't pretend. You know, Margaret, I think she is simply magnificent. It was horrid to call Miss King her 'crush,' and I never will again; but you Harvey girls have demoralized me," and with a saucy *moue* and without giving Margaret a chance to disclaim any part in such irreverence, she was off to catch Miss Belden before she should have left her room for chapel.

Much to Margaret's astonishment, Lois reported success when she met her at dinner. Miss Belden had accepted cordially and even before she knew Miss King was to be invited also. "I don't know anybody else but Miss King she would have done it for. It is evident you are one of her pets," said Margaret.

"Miss Belden doesn't have pets," responded Lois, with dignity, and Margaret subsided with a mild "oh!"

Lois had also seen Isabel and the Registrar. Isabel was delighted, of course, and there was no trouble in getting permission from the Registrar when she found Miss Belden was to be the chaperone.

"So I shall write to Mr. Hamilton this afternoon and tell him we can go. Oh! isn't it too good?"

The play was to be on Wednesday night and the Houghton concert two nights after—just time, Lois thought, to get well rested after the play.

And now the play was over.

Happily excited with the delightful triumph of the evening, Lois went to sleep with her head filled with visions of past glories and coming pleasures, for the sleigh-ride on Friday night disputed with the play for possession of her happy thoughts.

If it is a rule that realization never equals anticipation, it is proved by the exception. Eagerly as Lois had looked forward to the sleigh-ride, she had not pictured anything quite so delightful as it seemed to her when she found herself seated beside Mr. Hamilton, who was to do the driving, so muffled in warm wraps and tucked in with fur robes she could not move—the horses pawing and prancing and ringing their merry bells, impatient to be off, Isabel and Margaret, her two best friends, in the sleigh behind her with two such nice Houghton men, and her dear Miss Belden sitting beside Miss

King and proving herself the loveliest and jolliest of chaperones.

But when they were off, that was nicer still. Everybody was in such high spirits, they all talked together, and greeted with impartial laughter the poorest pun and the keenest wit.

Lois thought she had never breathed such keen, crisp, frosty air, nor known anything so exhilarating as their swift gliding over the smooth white road. Her enjoyment was so deep and thorough it had rather the effect of keeping her quiet, though she listened to the merry talk going on behind her, occasionally joining in a little. She did not at first notice that Mr. Hamilton was very quiet, too. When she did, and wondered at it a little, she thought that, like her, he was probably enjoying what was going on behind them. Or perhaps his horses required all his attention. They were spirited creatures and Lois had felt very glad that Mr. Hamilton was to do the driving. He was the kind of man you always felt confidence in, there was such an air of quiet strength about him. So she did not for a while concern herself very much about his silence, but afterward, when she began to feel that she ought to exert herself to be a little

more entertaining, and made some tentative efforts in that direction, she found him difficult. He was everything that mere politeness required, listened to all she said with grave attention, and answered, if briefly, yet always to the point; but there was no spontaneity. And ever since the foot-ball game there had been so much frankness and friendliness in their intercourse that Lois was sorely puzzled to understand him. After a while it irritated her that she should seem to be making overtures which were so coldly received, and she ceased trying to talk to him, and interested herself pointedly in her friends in the rear. Yet distrait as Mr. Hamilton appeared, he never seemed to forget Lois's comfort for a moment. If in turning to talk to those behind her she loosened her fur robes a little, he was quick to observe it and tuck them in again, and there were two questions that were of such frequent and regular recurrence they began to be annoying. "Are you cold, Miss Darcy? Not the least bit?" Or, "Are you sure you are quite comfortable?"

What the girls thought a most delightful part of the arrangements was that they were to go to the Houghton hotel for supper before the con-

cert. They had left Norwood at half-past four, and it was just an hour later when they drew up in front of the hotel. The gentlemen sprang out and began to assist the ladies to disentangle themselves from the robes and alight, and some one coming up to hold the horses, Mr. Hamilton sprang out too, and with a stately courtesy that was natural to him as a Georgian and comported well with his inches, he carefully excavated Lois from her nest of robes and lifted her from the sleigh.

A merry party gathered in the hotel parlor, where they divested themselves of several layers of outside coverings, and waited for a summons to supper, ready to do full justice to the good things mine host had provided for them.

Oysters and coffee and a very good salad proved to be the *pièces de résistance* in their menu, and proved also to be exactly what the Gale girls, including Miss Belden, especially liked, which was very satisfactory to their anxious hosts.

Mr. Hamilton was as attentive as possible at supper to everybody, particularly to Lois, of course; but it struck her he was on much more friendly terms with the rest of the party than

with her. Miss Belden scintillated with wit, and told such good stories and made everybody so happy and jolly that Lois was radiant. She was so proud to have these Houghton men see how perfectly delightful her adored teacher could be, of whom, knowing her only by reputation, they stood somewhat in awe. Lois saw that she had captivated Mr. Hamilton and was in turn captivated by him. Being petite and dark-eyed herself, Miss Belden said she always liked big, blue-eyed men. "Especially when they are so simple and manly in their ways as your friend," she said to Lois when they were again putting on their cloaks and furs for the concert.

Lois was inclined to say he was not her friend, for she did not feel that he had been altogether friendly that evening; but instead she said nothing.

The concert was a success, given principally by the Glee Club, but not entirely. Mr. Beacher had quite a prominent rôle and could not, of course, sit with them. They naturally felt more interest in him than in the others, and Isabel's eyes danced as she whispered to Lois after a song where as tenor soloist he had won great applause:

"Isn't he perfectly fine? I believe I like singing better than foot-ball, after all."

Lois gave her hand a sympathetic squeeze and whispered in return, "So do I."

It was on their way to the hotel from old College Hall (classic it may be, but primitive in the extreme with its paper muslin stage hangings) that Lois made a remark that brought out some explanations from Mr. Hamilton.

The moon had risen while they were in the concert-room. It was a little past the full, but still round and brilliant; and Lois said,

"That looks exactly like the moon we went skating by, Mr. Hamilton; is it the same time of the month?"

It was said tentatively. She was very impatient of his mood, and if he had any cause of complaint against her, she would make an opening for him to approach the subject.

He looked down at her quickly as if to question her purpose before he replied:

"Not quite; that was the first quarter, and this is the third. Do you know that it will be five weeks to-morrow since I saw you last?"

"Is it as long as that?" said Lois, lightly. "I don't quite understand why it should have

been;" and then quickly, as a sudden remembrance came to her of his skating through the water, "You have not been ill, have you? You didn't take cold?"

"No; or at least, not to amount to anything. I was laid up a day or two with a sore throat, but that was nothing. I was afraid from your manner when I left you that you were really offended with me, although you tried not to appear to be. And I assure you, Miss Darcy, I actually tried to make myself believe that I had done wrong, so that I could write to you and apologize and reinstate myself in your good opinion. But then when I knew I hadn't; that what I had done was perfectly right and proper, and the only thing to be done under the circumstances, I couldn't bring myself to the apology, even to recover the friendship I was afraid I had lost. And the more I thought about it, I began to feel very much hurt, and even to imagine you might be, like so many other women, perfectly unreasonable, and I might as well not try to please you."

He stopped a moment, and before he could begin again, Lois, who in the first part of his speech had felt a good deal of compunction, but

was beginning now to feel that she was being arraigned, broke in coldly:

"Then I suppose you think it is I who owe the apology, and you have invited me here to give me an opportunity of making it."

There was a little of the Darcy hauteur in her voice.

"Oh! no, no!" said Mr. Hamilton, quickly, despair in his tone and in the gesture that accompanied it.

"Are we never to understand each other? I invited you hoping that we might come to some understanding, and I could get back on the old footing. But if you let me, I will tell you how I came to dare to ask you. It was Sunday night, and I was sitting in my room in no very enviable frame of mind. I had been counting on this concert all winter, hoping there would be snow and I could bring you over in a sleigh; and now here was the concert close at hand, and the best of sleighing, and I didn't suppose there was any use of thinking about asking you for it; or, rather, I believe I was too proud and stubborn to make any overtures when I felt you were unjust to me. Suddenly there came to my mind that Sunday evening we spent with you

and your mother on Elm Street, when we had such a delightful, home-like time. And I thought of all your mother's kindness to me and how lovely and noble she was, and it came over me with a rush that I had been doing you an injustice—your mother's daughter could not be capricious and unreasonable. And then I remembered, too, how much you missed that mother; so much that I never dare speak of her to you, and I determined on the instant that I would arrange for the concert and have an opportunity to explain to you. I went right out to see Beacher and Markham, and of course they were ready for it, and I wrote the note and mailed it that evening."

His unexpected reference to her mother and the tenderness of his manner in speaking of her touched Lois to the quick. For the moment she could not speak. He was a quick and keen observer, and with an almost imperceptible pressure of the hand that lay on his arm, he went on:

"And now I do want to apologize. Not for carrying you across the water; if we are ever in the same predicament again, I shall do the same thing, with your consent, I hope; but if not, without it. But I want to apologize for having

been unjust to you in my thoughts, and for having sulked so long, for that is exactly what it was. Will you forgive me?"

He waited a moment. "Here we are at the hotel. Just one word. Please."

Lois was still struggling with the tears her mother's name had invoked, and she could not raise her eyes nor utter more than a monosyllable, but it was the right one, and Mr. Hamilton entered the hotel with his head up and the air of a king.

And what a change in him when they were once more in the sleigh on their way home! He was the merriest of the party, and sang more funny songs and told more and better stories than any one. He was really brilliant, and Lois had never thought him so before, though she had long since ceased to think him "stupid."

But when they had left Old Bradley and had begun to cross the river meadows, while the merriment was at its height, he turned to Lois:

"I want to say something to you, Miss Darcy."

They were separated a little from the others by their position, and he spoke in a low tone.

"Look up at me while I speak, please, so that

I can tell when to stop. Twice I have spoken to you about your mother, and twice I have brought the tears by so doing. Now I think more of your mother than you probably have any idea of, and I would like to talk with you about her and hear about her from you; and I think if you should once get into the way of talking to me about her, you would get over that sensitiveness, and I wouldn't feel that I dare not utter her name when I really want to talk of her. Suppose you try it and begin now by telling me all the news from her. You see I haven't heard a word since she went away."

It was quite true that Mr. Hamilton did want to hear from Mrs. Darcy, for whom he had conceived the warmest admiration; but it was also true that he had made up his mind to broach the subject thus frankly for Lois's sake. He saw that her mother's absence continued to be a sore subject with her, and he believed that nothing would get her into a stronger way of viewing it but to talk it over freely and fully.

Lois understood that, too; and with a little effort in the beginning she was soon talking easily, telling him everything she knew about her mother since she had left Norwood. And

then she was led into talking of her life in St. Mark's, and he of his Georgia home, until by the time they were in sight of the college they had learned more of each other than they had known in all the months before.

He had helped Lois from the sleigh at the door of the Harvey, and they were all taking merry leave of each other. He was holding the reins in one hand, standing beside the sleigh. He had asked Lois if he might come to vespers on Sunday, and she, remembering her mother's words, had said she would rather he would wait until the Sunday after. And then he found an opportunity of saying, as he held her hand for "Good-bye:"

"And you are quite sure I am back on the old footing?"

And Lois had answered with a bright smile, "I am quite sure." But she was mistaken. When two friends have had a misunderstanding, there is never any return to exactly the same place. They either lose ground or gain it. And Mr. Hamilton had not lost ground.

CHAPTER XV

BASKET-BALL

THE term was nearing its close. Only two weeks more, and Lois would be on the train, bound for home and mother. She hardly dared think of it, it sent the blood tingling through her veins to her very finger-tips. Only two weeks between her and that precious mother! In the interval would come the last great event of the winter term, the basket-ball game between the Freshmen and the Sophomores, and Lois was practicing faithfully every day. Miss Baker had proposed some time before that Lois should go home with her at the Easter holidays. "I would so love to have a visit from you, and it is so far to go to St. Mark's."

Lois expressed the pleasure that it would give her to make the visit, but said at once that she could not think of not going home to see her mother, and though Miss Baker had often recurred to it, Lois hardly gave it a moment's thought.

Sometimes, when Margaret was picturing all the lovely things they would do, if she would only go home with her at Easter, Lois had thought she would like to visit her some time. She had not been to New York since she was a child, and to every Western girl, New York is a kind of glittering Mecca, where all that is fascinating and delightful in life is enshrined. The prospect of visiting there in such a delightful home, as she knew Mrs. Baker's must be, would have been irresistibly alluring, but for the dearer prospect of seeing her mother. That morning two letters had arrived for Lois. One was the usual bi-weekly letter from her mother, and had been devoured before the other was even glanced at. One sentence in it had troubled her a little. "The M., L. & W. passed its dividend this quarter. Isn't it too bad? Just when we need the money so much. The circular letter from the Directors accompanying the notice says it is due to the present financial stringency, and they feel assured that it will not be found necessary to resort to such emergency measures again. And we'll hope not, too; won't we, Lois? And in the meanwhile, I suppose we will have to be just a little

bit more economical." Lois was apt to take money matters a little more seriously than her mother. She knew all about her mother's affairs. They had been in the habit of talking them over together from the time Lois was a little child, and it was often Lois who restrained her mother from some extravagance into which she was tempted for the sake of her child, on whom she would have liked to lavish all the good things of this world.

Lois knew that the M., L. & W. dividend was not a large one. It was just about what the expenses of her trip home would have been, and no doubt her mother was counting on it to meet that expense.

"I am afraid mamma will be dipping into her capital," she thought. She had known her mother to do that several times before when very much pressed. With a little wrinkle between her eyes that always came when she was worried or troubled, she opened the second letter, postmarked "New York," and directed in an entirely strange hand. It was from Mrs. Baker, a very sweet and cordial note, inviting Lois to come home with Margaret for the Easter holidays; telling her how much she desired to

meet her daughter's little friend, whom Margaret said looked so like her own Helen. And then she added, in conclusion: "If we can offer you no other inducement, perhaps the difference in expense may tempt you. You can, of course, come on Margaret's pass, which is always made out for two, and I do not think your Easter trip need cost you anything."

Lois appreciated the kindliness of this last argument. Margaret's father was a wealthy railroad man. Margaret herself was always liberally supplied with pocket money, and she knew that Lois had to be very careful in her expenditures.

The arrival of the two letters together seemed to Lois like another of those "indications of Providence." She was more troubled after reading the second than she had been after reading the first. Here seemed to be the very way pointed out to her to save almost the exact amount of her mother's lost dividend. But to give up seeing her mother—that seemed more than Lois's strength was equal to. She had been looking forward to it so long, and her mother—could she endure such a postponement? But the more Lois thought of it, the more it seemed

to her that she ought to accept Mrs. Baker's invitation. There were plenty of girls from the West, and far richer girls than Lois, who never saw mother and home from September to June. What other girls could do, Lois felt sure she could do. But then her mother! That, after all, must be the deciding point. If she should be perfectly willing, and was not going to suffer too much from the disappointment, then Lois thought she ought to accept the invitation; but if otherwise, her duty was plain. She would write to her mother immediately, explaining it all to her, and inclosing Mrs. Baker's letter, and her mother should decide.

It had taken a long time to think it all over, and come to this conclusion. Lois was glad it was Wednesday afternoon, and no lessons, and glad, too, that Margaret had not happened to come in and find her in such perplexity. She could tell her now, when she saw her, about the invitation, and that she had written to her mother to see if she should accept it. The time was short. It would take at least a week to receive her mother's answer, and Lois sat down and dispatched her letter at once.

She found it a difficult letter to write, for she

was afraid her mother would think she wanted to go to New York, rather than home to her, and so she said how much she wanted to see her, and how much she would miss her if she did not go home; but perhaps this time she had better save the money, and it would just balance the lost dividend. And then, after writing that, she was afraid her mother would think she was making too great a sacrifice, and not consider it for a moment; and so she added that she would no doubt have a very nice time, and set forth in rather glowing colors some of the allurements which had been presented to her.

Lois was not at all satisfied with the letter, fearful that her mother would think she wanted to go to New York, and fearful that she would think she did not want to go. She closed by saying, she would leave it to her to decide; and whatever the decision, she would abide by it cheerfully.

After it was written and sent, Lois felt the burden of uncertainty relieved, and began to think that going to New York was not to be considered in the light of duty alone. There was much that was very alluring to a young girl eager to know the world, and she purposely

dwelt on the delights that probably awaited her there, until when she met Margaret, she was able to talk quite enthusiastically on the pleasure it would give her to accept Mrs. Baker's invitation, if she found her mother thought it best.

And, after all, it was just as Isabel said. Lois did play on the basket-ball team. It was in the latter part of the game, and at a critical moment. The gymnasium gallery was thronged. The faculty were out in force, wearing the Sophomore yellow or the Freshman red, and the President wearing both impartially. The two teams, with their dresses of dark blue, and sashes of their class colors, with glowing cheeks and sparkling eyes, had been doing some fine playing.

The score was almost even, but the Freshmen were on the point of putting the ball into the basket, and it would probably be the last score and a draw, for the time was nearly up, when one of the very best players on the Freshman team, Miss Brown, fell with the ball in her hands, as she was about to pass it to Miss Bentley, the tall Freshman who stood by the basket for the purpose of putting in the ball. The tall

Sophomore, standing in the same place to prevent it, quickly saw her advantage, seized the ball, and was about to hurl it back, when the umpire stopped the game temporarily. Miss Brown had not risen; she was evidently hurt. They found she had sprained her ankle, and while they were removing her from the field, and attending to her injuries, the Freshman captain appointed Lois to take her place.

Lois's quick eye saw that here was her opportunity to save the game. She stepped right into Miss Brown's place, with eyes fixed steadily on the ball, and when play began again, the ball had hardly left the tall Sophomore's hand before Lois had seized it, passed it swiftly to Miss Bentley, and it was in the basket.

"Time!" called the umpire, "and the score stands even!"

The excitement was intense. Never before had the Freshmen come so near beating the Sophomores, and they claimed vociferously that if the umpire had noticed some flagrant fouls the game would have been theirs. The Sophomores begged for another five minutes; they could not stand the disgrace of a draw game,

and they felt sure five minutes more would give them the victory.

The Freshmen, on the other hand, were quite willing to rest on their laurels. The umpire was besieged, but would not decide so weighty a question and appealed to the President. The Sophomores, older and more daring than the Freshmen, and supported by the powerful Seniors, plead for the five minutes, and it was granted. The little interval of rest had given the Freshmen time to find out how tired and how nervous they were, they began to lose confidence in themselves and played poorly. Lois alone was fresh and confident of success. She was everywhere at once; the ball no sooner left a Sophomore's hand than Lois had it and was flinging it to Miss Bentley. Her swift and accurate playing called forth ringing cheers from the Freshmen and Juniors, but the Sophomore guards were always a little too quick, and Miss Bentley never had another chance to put it in the basket. At the end of the five minutes the Sophomores had scored another point and the game was theirs.

The wildest confusion prevailed. Freshmen and Sophomores gathered around their defeated

and victorious teams, and there were recriminations and counter-recriminations ; unrecorded fouls were charged to both sides, and the Freshmen insisted that the extra five minutes should not be counted. Freshmen were weeping, their Junior coaches were weeping, and the umpire, charged with favoritism, was weeping and declaring she would never umpire another game.

At supper, the battle was all fought over again, for it chanced that there were several members of each team in the Harvey, and three Freshmen and two Sophomores left the table in tears.

"Do you suppose," said Miss Belden, as the last one left the room, "that there is so much weeping among the men in college after a football game?"

"Oh! no!" said Lois, "I have always heard they have an entirely different way of venting their feelings, which seems to give them as great relief as tears do us, but it is a very different way."

"Well, Lois," said Isabel, later in the evening, "I hope you are satisfied. You not only played, but everybody says it was your play

that made the game a draw and saved the Freshmen colors, for none of us count the extra five minutes. Lois Darcy, I solemnly declare that if I should read about a girl like you in a story, I should say she was an utterly impossible girl."

CHAPTER XVI

HOPE DEFERRED

THERE were many times in the weeks that followed the Christmas holidays that Mrs. Darcy thought she had made a mistake in deciding upon the separation. Not for Lois; her letters coming regularly, filled with accounts of skating and dancing, the great play, the Houghton concert, spreads, basket-ball, and Miss Belden, assured her mother that Lois was having just what she had coveted for her. She did feel a little anxious about Mr. Hamilton sometimes; for Lois always wrote a full account of every time she saw him, and it seemed to her mother that there was something about him in almost every letter. She had rather rejoiced over the interval of five weeks when there had been no mention of him, though she wondered what could be the reason. She would not question Lois; if she saw him, Mrs. Darcy was very sure she would write about it. If there was any significant reason why she did not see

him, she still thought Lois would tell her why; and if there was no reason she was not going to suggest questions to Lois's mind. But after the Houghton concert, the letters were fuller than ever of him. There had been another sleighing party, this time a party of twelve, most of them Juniors and Seniors, and Miss Belden again the chaperone, to take supper at Chan Richardson's in Whitby. Mr. Hamilton had been driver again. The seats were wide, they sat three on a seat, and Miss Belden had been in front with Mr. Hamilton and herself, and had done most of the talking, of course, and they had had such a good time.

There had been more skating, and Lois reported herself as becoming quite an accomplished skater, thanks to Mr. Hamilton. And there had been mention of his appearing at vespers several times, and once or twice remaining to spend the evening, when they had spent it most delightfully in Miss Belden's room and between whom and Mr. Hamilton had been formed quite a mutual admiration society. Lois did not forget to tell her mother, either, how anxious Mr. Hamilton always was to hear from her, and her letters usually contained a message from him—

sometimes his regards, sometimes it was to say how much he missed her, and in the later letters, it was always his "love and '*Auf Wiedersehen.*'" Mrs. Darcy was glad to be remembered by him, and generally sent him some little message in return, and still, she felt just a little anxious, hoping with all her heart that her little girl would return to her heart-whole; and she did not fail to give her little bits of loving advice, still on the important question of how to prevent too great devotion. She did not say very much, for she felt that she must steer clear of the opposite danger of arousing, by her anxiety, a latent feeling that otherwise might lie dormant.

It was not on Lois's account, therefore, that she doubted the wisdom of her plan; but she sometimes feared that she was not going to be able to endure the strain herself. She was not so strong as she thought. She had fancied there was nothing that she could not do and endure for Lois bravely, and even cheerfully, in the thought that it was for her. Mentally and morally she believed she would be able to go through with it, but she sometimes feared that physically she would give way. She had not fully realized the void it would leave in her

life to take out of it so suddenly what had so filled it for seventeen years.

So, immediately after Lois's departure for Norwood, she plunged feverishly into her old work. She would not allow herself time to think, and she added new lines of work to the old ones. As she had said to Lois, there was always so much more work than workers to do it, and there was not a charitable organization in the city that would not have welcomed gladly such a well-known and efficient worker. She did not want to undertake more than she could do well, but she did want to undertake all she could do, believing that with her hands and her heart full of other people's woes was the only way she could bear her own.

There were many society engagements also to be met. Her old friends welcomed her back very lovingly and delightedly, for they had expected to give her up almost entirely for four years. And there were teas and receptions and cozier dinners and luncheons given in her honor, and at all of them Mrs. Darcy had been bright and even gay. And people had said that they had never supposed Mrs. Darcy could bear a separation from Lois so well, it was wonderful;

she was always cheerful, and they thought her spirits seemed higher than they used. And so no doubt they did; for in her eager determination to be brave and cheerful, she often carried it to the extreme of feverish gayety, which was quite unlike the quiet, gentle Mrs. Darcy her friends had always known.

There was only one friend who seemed to guess that the gay spirits were not altogether natural, and that the cheerfulness might be assumed. Dr. Colton, her old family physician, who had known her from babyhood, whose good wife had "taken her to board," she said—had given her a home, Mrs. Darcy said—was the only one that did not altogether like the flush he so often saw on her cheek, and thought her eye was brighter than was natural, and sometimes shook his head when he heard her friends tell her how well she was looking.

He said to his wife one day, when Mrs. Darcy had just left them, going out to attend a meeting of the Woman's Christian Association, "Elizabeth, I wish you would try to persuade Mrs. Darcy not to belong to so many societies, and to so many teas; she is killing herself."

"Why, father," exclaimed Mrs. Colton in gen-

uine astonishment, for so she always called her husband, "I never saw Mrs. Darcy look so well and seem so bright, and everybody else says the same. What do you mean?"

"I mean," said her husband grimly, "that if she goes on as she is doing now, there will be a terrible smash-up some day, and we will have Lois sent for in hot haste, when it is too late, perhaps. It is all nonsense, separating mother and daugher in that way, such a mother and such a daughter, anyhow. A fig for your higher education! What does it all amount to, compared with a broken heart?" And the doctor, who had been waxing wroth as he talked, rose and stamped up and down the room.

Mrs. Colton was frightened. She had implicit faith in her husband's powers of diagnosis, and she determined to watch Mrs. Darcy narrowly, and to persuade her, if possible, to give up part of her work, and if things were really so bad, to send for Lois. But she found it was useless to try to persuade her to give up her work. "As well ask me to give up my life," Mrs. Darcy said, almost passionately.

And as the days went on, and she still seemed

so bright and cheerful, Mrs. Colton concluded that, for once, her infallible husband must be mistaken. She was too good a physician's wife to tell him so, but she told him that she could not do much with Mrs. Darcy, but she was going to try to feed her up, at least, and tempt her with little dainties, for Mrs. Colton acknowledged that her appetite was not what it ought to be, and she believed firmly in good feeding, as a cure for most of the ills that flesh is heir to.

Mrs. Darcy herself knew that she was far from well. A restless energy was consuming her, and her strength was daily growing less. Sometimes she felt a little alarmed about herself, but there was always the thought that every day, every week, slowly as they dragged themselves along, were bringing her nearer to Lois. It was less than two weeks now to the Easter vacation, and in the joy of the thought, she was really beginning to feel a return of the old strength and elasticity, so different from the feverish energy that kept her always at work, while it was consuming her very life. Even her appetite was improved, greatly to Mrs. Colton's delight, and the doctor, who had been giv-

ing her a tonic for some weeks, thought that at last his medicine was beginning to take effect.

Mrs. Darcy had secretly been considering the possibility of returning with Lois after the Easter holidays, if she should find that Lois, too, had been suffering from the separation, or if it should seem impossible for her to part with her again. The passing of the M., L. & W. dividend would make that difficult, but there were some things, Mrs. Darcy felt, were worth more than money, and she was sure there were other ways in which she could economize and so feel justified in going back with Lois, if she felt that she could not stand another ten weeks' separation.

Every day, and almost every hour, she pictured to herself, even to the smallest detail, the joy of that meeting now so rapidly drawing near. Only one week now, and to-day she would write, sending Lois the check for traveling expenses. She would have to draw a little on the future for it, for she had been depending on the M., L. & W. check, as Lois supposed. But she did not care; that was a small matter in comparison with the great joy the money was going to bring her.

The happiest hours of Mrs. Darcy's life now were those she spent in writing to Lois and in reading her letters. She looked forward almost as eagerly to the time of writing her as to the time of receiving her letters. She felt so much as if she were having a talk with her little girl. To-day she awoke with a feeling of expectancy that something pleasant was going to happen, and then she remembered what it was. She was to go to a Board-meeting in the morning, and while she was out she would get the check, and after luncheon she would spend the afternoon in writing to Lois.

She was really looking like her old self, Dr. Colton said at the breakfast table. And while still at breakfast came the mail, bringing an unexpected letter from Lois; she would not open it in the breakfast room; that was too exquisite a pleasure for any eyes, however kind, to witness. But breakfast was long this morning. Dr. Colton was in a talking mood, and had much to say on the Russo-mania that was driving France wild—on Lord Roseberry's attitude toward the Upper House—and the degrading spectacle of our own Upper House, filibustering over the tariff—topics all dis-

cussed at length in his morning paper. Even when they had risen from the table, she could not get away at once to her room. Mrs. Colton was expecting a dressmaker, and wanted Mrs. Darcy's advice on some occult point of trimming before she should arrive; and Mabel, Lois's friend, and very dear to Mrs. Darcy on that account, wanted her help in translating a troublesome passage in her "Athalie."

But she was free at last, and, trying not to seem eager and hurried, she slipped away with the precious letter in her hand. Once safely in her room, she turned the key in the lock, that she might be absolutely free from intrusion, and sat down to read it. She read it once; read the enclosed note, and then slowly read the letter through again.

How long she sat there she never knew. She felt as if an icy hand had gripped her heart, and was slowly crushing the life out. She was half conscious of feeling glad that her room was already in order, so that she would not be likely to be disturbed by the maid; glad that Mabel was at school; glad that Mrs. Colton had a dressmaker to keep her engaged all the morning. She did not try to think, and feeling

seemed to be dead. She was conscious only of one idea—an awful fact that seemed to her like some hideous monster, crouching to spring at her and throttle her. Lois could get along without her. Lois could wait another ten weeks, twelve weeks, without seeing her. The point of the money to be saved hardly impressed her at all, and it did not occur to her that Lois might be making a great sacrifice when she proposed to go to New York, instead of coming home.

Mrs. Darcy's views were not narrow; they were probably broader and more fair-minded than those of the average woman, or man either. But one idea had taken such complete possession of her for the last few weeks—the idea of seeing Lois at Easter—she had been clinging to it with such desperation, as almost the only hold left her on life and happiness, that when that seemed about to fail her, everything seemed to give way. She felt as if there was no solid ground anywhere; almost her love and trust in Lois seemed to be without foundation. Only one thought kept running through her brain, "I am not necessary to Lois." She read between the lines in her letter, and read most unjustly to Lois,

that she was anxious to accept this invitation. She was dazzled with the enticements that had been set before her, and the failure of the dividends had come opportunely as a convenient pretext. She could easily wait a few more weeks to see her mother. She would abide cheerfully by her mother's decision. That is, if her mother insisted on her coming home, she could come "cheerfully." For the first time in her life there was something like bitterness in her heart toward her child. Lois had intended to express to her mother that if she thought it was best for her to go to New York, she would try to be very brave and cheerful about giving up her visit home and seeing her mother, which was none the less the longing desire of her heart. But it was an unfortunate expression, perhaps, at least her mother had interpreted it in quite a different way—that she would try to be cheerful if she had to give up the New York visit.

It was a warm day in early spring. The windows were open, and the air that came in was as soft and balmy as a June day in Norwood. But Mrs. Darcy was cold. She roused herself from her semi-stupor finally, to find that she was al-

most in a chill. It was long past time for her Board meeting, and it was rapidly nearing the hour for luncheon. She could not think of going down-stairs and meeting Dr. and Mrs. Colton in her dazed condition; she would send word that she had a headache, and could not eat anything. It was true her head was aching frightfully, although she had not noticed it before. She rose and rang for Norah, and while waiting for her to come, went to the window and leaned out. A redbird, the first she had seen, was perched on the branch of a cottonwood tree just outside her window, fluttering his wings and shaking his little throat as he poured from it a torrent of joyous notes.

The cottonwood was in its first delicate green leaf, and suddenly it flashed across her how she used to sit at her window in Norwood and watch the great maple opposite turn to red and gold, and then lose its leaves, and think with what delight she would watch it put them all on again in the spring. And now the spring had come, and she was here, and Lois in Norwood. She shivered and turned from her window just as Norah knocked at the door. She sent her message to Mrs. Colton, especially request-

ing that they should not send her anything; she only wanted to be perfectly quiet and undisturbed. The kind-hearted Norah, struck by the look of suffering in Mrs. Darcy's face, wanted to insist on bringing her at least a little toast and tea; but she managed to convince her that what she wanted was only rest and absolute quiet, and sent her away. She wrapped a light shawl about her, but she was still cold. Near the window stood her couch, luxuriously upholstered and piled with soft pillows. She sank down on it, burying her throbbing head among the pillows, and pulling up the warm slumber robe over her. Now, she thought, she would try to think of it connectedly, and decide what to write to Lois. But instead, there came to her happy memories of the days they had spent together in Norwood; that lovely afternoon in Paradise, their trip to Fredericsburg, their walks and rides, the happy evenings and long talks they used to have together by their cozy fireside, and, last of all, came the memory of that golden Sunday in October, and the beautiful vesper service, when she had so fully resolved to bring every care and every sorrow to the Burden-bearer; and she realized, with a startled

feeling of almost remorse how far she had wandered from that resolve. But it was not too late to retrace her steps, and, closing her eyes, she brought her burdened heart to the Comforter, and emptied all its load of sorrow at His feet. She felt it roll away, as if a great physical weight had been lifted from her, and with it vanished every trace of the bitterness toward her child, that had made her suffering so keen. Two great tears forced themselves from under her closed eyelids, as, stretching out her arms as if to draw her child to her heart, she cried, "Lois, darling, how could I ever doubt you for a moment—the best, the sweetest, the most loving child God ever blessed a mother with! It is only that you are wiser and stronger than your weak, foolish mother. God bless her and God make me worthy of her!" And then, nestling like a little child among the pillows, and softly murmuring Lois's name, she fell asleep.

CHAPTER XVII

PATIENT WAITING

Mrs. Darcy slept for hours—the sleep of one utterly exhausted. She woke with a start, to find that it was the middle of the afternoon. Mabel was just tip-toeing into the room, bearing in her hands a tray with a little pot of steaming tea and a covered plate of toast. "I hope I didn't wake you," said she, as Mrs. Darcy opened her eyes; "I tried to be very still, and if you were asleep I was going out again without disturbing you; but I thought if you were awake, you must need at least a cup of tea by this time."

"Why, Mabel, is it you? Are you home from school? How long I must have slept!" And Mrs. Darcy sat up, trying to realize what it was that made her feel so weak and bruised. She realized it very soon; but with the remembrance of the letter, and all the sorrow it had brought her, came also the sense of peace with which she had fallen asleep. Mabel drew up a little stand by the couch, and made the tea for her with many

anxious inquiries as to whether she felt better, and whether her headache was gone. When Mrs. Darcy assured her it was quite gone, and she felt very well, only a little weak, she delivered a message from her mother. Did she think she would feel well enough to go to Mrs. Davis's this evening? Mrs. Darcy had forgotten all about her dinner for the evening, and she wished —oh! so ardently—that she could stay at home. She really did not feel equal to meeting so many people, but she knew that the little dinner had been made for her, and she could not disappoint her dear friend, Mrs. Davis. So she answered, "I think so, Mabel. Tell your mother I will get up and dress presently, and see how I feel." The tea did her good, and she was surprised with what relish she ate the delicately made toast. She had felt in the morning as if she could never eat anything again. But now, when Mabel had carried away her tray, she felt so much stronger and quite equal to the task of dressing. It was slow work, however, for she was still weak and languid, and when it was accomplished, she felt that the result was hardly a success, as she saw the dark circles around her eyes and the extreme pallor of the face reflected

in the glass. But her friends received her excuse of headache as sufficient explanation of her lack of color and slight languor, and she could feel when she returned home that she had not failed on her part in making her friend's dinner a success.

Mrs. Darcy had not told any one that Lois would not return at Easter. She said to herself that it was not fully decided, and until the decision was made, she did not feel equal to the discussions that would arise. Yet she had decided, or very nearly so. She knew that Lois was right. They ought to save the money, of course; and while she no longer accused Lois of preferring New York, she thought it was an unusual opportunity for her to see New York society under the most favorable auspices.

The next morning she wrote her letter, a brief one. She felt more languid, if possible, than on the day before, and the writing tired her. When she had finished it she put on her bonnet and took a down-town car to get a check to inclose in it. She could take a car just a block from the house and ride to the bank doors. It was another warm, lovely spring day. She got into an open car, and the rapid ride through the lovely air

did her good. She made up her mind that she would ride out to the Park every pleasant morning. She realized when she looked in the glass that the rosy color that had always given her the effect of youth was quite gone, and the thinness she had noticed for a long time in the looseness of her clothing was beginning to make itself perceptible in her face. She must try to get herself into better condition for Lois's sake. She would not like to have her come home and find the rosy roundness she admired so much in her "pretty mamma," as she often called her, all gone. Perhaps she was working too hard and had better resign from some of her societies; she would consider it.

She was sending Lois money for her New York trip. She would not have her go among strangers without a comfortable supply to use as she wished, and she knew Lois would not be extravagant. She mailed her letter, and then, longing for solitude and fresh air, she boarded a cable train bound for the Park, and took a front seat on the "grip." It was what she and Lois used to do, when the pleasant spring days came. They liked to feel themselves rushing through the air, with nothing to obstruct

their vision, and no fellow-passengers in front of them to make them realize it was not a peculiar kind of private vehicle, run for their sole benefit. At the entrance to the Park she left the car and wandered around on the grass, picking great bunches of pale pink spring beauties and purple violets and white dog-tooth violets, so called, which do not even belong to the violet family. And she thought of all the springs that she and Lois had gathered them there together, from the time she had brought her, a little golden-haired baby, and set her down on the grass to creep among the flowers, making loud and joyous sniffs at them, and using her one word, "Pitty, pitty!" She thought she could almost distinguish every individual spring since, in her memory. The next one, when she was a roguish toddler, and picked handfuls of the "pitty fowers," with no stems to speak of, and brought them tightly crushed in her small hand, to deposit in mamma's lap. And then, when the beautiful child, with long, golden curls and seraphic eyes, always in dainty and picturesque costumes, eagerly gathering floral treasures, made a picture that carriages and strollers through the Park often stopped to

enjoy. And then, that last spring, just a year ago, when Lois had fastened a great bunch of violets in her mother's gray dress, and had said, "Dear old Woodland Park, how we will miss you next spring, mamma and I, when we are away in Norwood! But we will think of you, and talk of you, and often long to be here; won't we, mamma?"

Mrs. Darcy had on her gray dress again, and she fastened a bunch of violets in it, just as Lois had done, and then went home for luncheon, with a little flush on her cheek, and a little brightness in her eyes that had not been there in the morning.

When the good doctor heard where she had been he said, "That's right. Give up your societies and spend your mornings in the Park. The winter is over, and your poor can get on very well without you."

And so, gradually, she did give up her societies, one after another, because she felt too listless to keep them up. She tried for a while to go to the Park every pleasant morning, but the springs are warm in St. Mark's, and after a while she could not summon energy enough for the little trip. She told Dr. Colton that she thought

she had spring fever and needed a tonic—something stronger than the one he had been giving her. "The tonic you need is Lois," said the doctor, gruffly; "better send for her." But Mrs. Darcy would not think of it. It was only six weeks now until Lois would be at home, and every letter was full of the Glee Club concert soon to come off, and at which she was to sing a solo. How she wished her mother might be there to hear it! "Then why don't you go on there and be at the concert, and stay till school is over, and come back with Lois," said the doctor. Mrs. Darcy had been thinking of it, but the expense of the journey frightened her. If Norwood were only not so far away! "Expense nothing!" was the doctor's rude rejoinder, for, having a heart as soft as a woman's, he often tried to conceal his weakness by a particularly rough and forbidding exterior. It never frightened Mrs. Darcy. She knew him too well. But it did some people. "Expense nothing!" said the doctor. "I am your physician, and I order a change of air for you. Norwood air is what you need, and you may just as well go to work and get yourself ready to be there in time for the concert. Lois will sing twice as well with you there to hear her."

And so, with the doctor's authority to support her in what she, herself, so longed to do, she let herself think of it, and finally decided to do it. Only she must first have at least one new dress. She could not go to Lois looking shabby. She had her dressmaker to see, shopping to do, and a thousand and one little preparations to make, in the stir and excitement of which her old energy seemed to return, and she was as bright and happy as a child. The dressmaker promised her dress so that she could start in time to reach Norwood the day before the concert. She had not written Lois that she was coming; she wanted to surprise her.

It was the day on which she was to start. The dress had come home, and was carefully packed in Mrs. Darcy's trunk, which stood open in her room waiting to receive the last little things. She was to take the evening train; breakfast was just over, and she had gone up-stairs to get the money for Dr. Colton, who was to buy her tickets for her. The family was still in the breakfast-room, when suddenly they heard a sound which is like no other sound and which always strikes a chill to the hearts of those who hear it—the fall of a human body. The doctor

uttered a sharp exclamation: "Mrs. Darcy!" and was up-stairs four steps at a time, with Mrs. Colton and Mabel not far behind him. They found her lying on the floor in her room, and so white and still that Mrs. Colton and Mabel burst into terrified sobs. They thought she was dead. For a few moments the doctor almost thought so too; it was so difficult to find any signs of life. But he did at last detect a feeble, almost imperceptible pulse, and he set to work at once to restore her. He had his wife and daughter and servants flying in all directions for ice, for hot water, for ammonia. Everything his skill could suggest was done.

At last, when Dr. Colton was just about to give up in despair, she drew a long, labored breath like a sigh, and opened her eyes. "Thank God!" said the doctor under his breath, and those who heard him felt that he had feared she might never open them. The doctor would not leave her to see any of his patients. He sat beside her, with his hand on her pulse, giving her from time to time a few drops of a powerful stimulant. After awhile she seemed better, and opening her eyes wide, turned to the doctor. "I can go to-night, doctor, can't I?

It was only a little fainting attack." And the eager look that accompanied the words went to the doctor's heart like a knife. He answered gently, "Not to-night, Mrs. Darcy, but to-morrow, if you seem perfectly well, I think you can go, and you will still be in time for the concert."

She had to be content with that, and her effort to be patient was pitiful. She thought she would soon be able to sit up, and made many efforts, as she was anxious to be ready for to-morrow, but every time she lifted her head from the pillows, she was glad to let it fall again, she was so weak and dizzy. At last she stopped trying, and lay still the rest of the day, only begging the doctor when she saw him that he would give her something that would quickly make her strong.

Mrs. Colton stayed with her at night; she slept much of the time, but moaned in her sleep almost constantly. In the morning she woke early, and at once tried to rise, but fell back weak and exhausted, while such a look of anguish came over her face that Mrs. Colton thought she must be in great pain, and inquired if it were so.

"Oh! no; I have no pain, but I am so weak, and I want to go to Lois." It was like the plaintive cry of a child for its mother, and Mrs. Colton could hardly keep back the tears as she answered her.

"You shall have some breakfast right away, and perhaps you will feel better when you have had a cup of tea; I will go and see about it."

"Oh! yes, please," whispered Mrs. Darcy faintly, catching eagerly at the least hope.

Mrs. Colton hurried away to attend to it, and on the stairs met the doctor coming up to inquire for his patient. His wife stopped to tell him about her, and about the look on her face when she found she could not get up. The tears were running down Mrs. Colton's face. "Oh! you don't think she will die, do you?" she said. The doctor shook his head; he didn't answer otherwise, but hurried on to Mrs. Darcy's room.

"O doctor!" she said, the moment he opened the door, "can I go?"

He came up to her cheerfully and took her hand. How small and wasted it was. "Why, Mrs. Darcy," he said, "I don't think it looks much like it this morning; does it? I expect my prescription came too late. You

ought to have gone to Norwood two months ago. But we can do the next best thing; we can have Lois out here. I can send her a telegram to-day, and she can be here the day after to-morrow." Mrs. Darcy's eyes had closed the moment Dr. Colton had uttered the first few words, and beneath the lids slow tears were pressing themselves. But the moment he said "telegram" she opened them quickly.

"Oh! no, no, doctor! You must not send a telegram; it would kill Lois. There is no need of such hurry as that. Let Mabel write to her, but not a letter that will alarm her; only say I am not well, and you think she had better not stay until the close of the term, but come home as soon as she can conveniently arrange it. Don't frighten her, doctor, and don't send the letter so that she will get it before the concert; it will only make a difference of a day or two, and I am sure there cannot be any such great need of haste." She spoke with an effort, with long pauses between, but so eagerly that the good doctor could not deny her.

"Oh! no;" he said cheerfully; "there is no hurry, of course; only the sooner you see Lois the sooner you will begin to get well. You know

about the mails of Norwood; when should Mabel write to have it reach her the first mail after the concert?"

Mrs. Darcy thought a moment. "A letter leaving here on the night mail reaches Norwood the second evening afterward, but too late for delivery. She would get it the next morning. Mabel can write to-day, and she will get it the morning after the concert."

"In time to take the morning train?"

"No, but she can take one in the evening, and it will only make a day's difference and give her time to get ready. Don't alarm her, doctor."

And so it was settled, and Mabel, who could not be induced to go to school and leave her dear Mrs. Darcy so ill, especially as she could be of real use in sitting in her room and giving her mother a chance to rest, sat down and wrote the letter as carefully as she could, not to alarm Lois unnecessarily, and mailed it in time for the evening collection. Mrs. Darcy asked her to calculate how soon Lois could get home if she should take the first train after receiving the letter, and they decided that on the evening of the fifth day was the first moment Lois could be expected. It might be later, of course, if she did not take in

the gravity of the occasion, and waited to complete her arrangements thoroughly.

But now it was evident that Mrs. Darcy was very ill. Dr. Colton could find no traces of organic heart trouble, as he had at first feared; her pulse was feeble and flickering, and her temperature, though not very high, was above the normal; but her leading and most alarming symptom was an intense weakness, if weakness may be so described. Much of the time she lay in a semi-stupor, and then there would be hours when, while apparently sleeping, she was constantly muttering and moaning as if in delirium.

On the evening of the second day after the letter had been sent, she suddenly opened her eyes wide, and looked at Mabel, who sat beside her, clearly and intelligently. "What day is this, Mabel?"

"The fourteenth," said Mabel, almost frightened, and quite overjoyed to hear her speak so clearly and rationally.

"Then this is the night of the concert, and perhaps at this very moment Lois is singing her solo." Mrs. Darcy closed her eyes, and lay a long time very quietly, with her hands clasped on her breast. Mabel saw her lips move a few times, but

could hear no words; she fancied she was praying; and she was. In thought, she was in the concert room at Norwood. She saw her darling as plainly as if she had indeed been sitting in the brilliant audience that filled every standing place. She saw the starry eyes, the head thrown slightly back, and heard the rich, sweet notes that poured from the white throat. And then she prayed, "Heavenly Father, let me live to see my darling!"

Mabel, sitting by her side, did not like to move, she lay so quietly; but after a long while, she leaned over her, and listened to her breathing, and spoke her name softly. There was no reply, and she saw that Mrs. Darcy was sleeping quietly, as she had not slept for many hours.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE GLEE CLUB CONCERT

Lois had come back from her Easter holidays with one thought uppermost—ten long weeks until she could see her mother. She had immediately adopted a system, that heretofore she had rather scorned as childish, marking off on her calendar each day as it passed, and counting the days that remained. It was not ten weeks, either; it was only nine, for she had discovered that First Class girls were permitted to leave as soon as examinations were over, to make room in boarding-houses and assembly halls for the rush of Commencement visitors. She had a fine visit to New York; her friends left nothing undone to make it enjoyable. They had not done very much sight-seeing, for there were so many social engagements—concerts, dances, luncheons, dinners, teas, calls, and shopping, they would have been utterly worn out, but that Mrs. Baker had insisted that they should sleep every morning until it was neces-

sary to get ready for some engagement. Lois began to feel that if that was a sample of the life of a society girl, it was no easy life, and though two weeks of it were delightful, she did not believe she coveted it as a career. They spent several mornings at the museum, and again Lois felt that she was having only a tantalizing glimpse of art treasures that she would have liked to revel in for weeks. The opera season was over, but they had some great concerts, with some of the opera stars to sing, and Paderewski's recital, to set her quite as wild as any of the New York girls; and of course, she was very happy, for music was her passion.

Mr. Hamilton had spent part of the last week in New York, and Mrs. Baker had made him very welcome at her house, inviting him informally to luncheon and dinner and including him in every party that was possible. Lois had a chance to compare him with the New York men, and thought it was not to the detriment of the Georgian. Not but that she liked the New York men that she had met; she did, very much; they had such ease and grace; they seemed to know their world so well, and the facile way in which they glanced from one conversational topic

to another, touching on everything, dwelling on nothing, and showing themselves thoroughly at home in little society nothings, was very captivating to a young girl who had seen almost nothing of society. And the pretty Gale girl, with the wonderful voice, a graceful dancer, and not afraid to talk, was a great favorite with Margaret's friends, much to Margaret's delight, for she had been quite sure it would be so.

Engagements were made so far ahead that by the time Mr. Hamilton arrived there was very little chance of seeing much of him. But Mrs. Baker, who was as kind and thoughtful as a society leader usually is, managed to secure partners for him to those affairs that required them, making him her own escort when nothing better offered, so that he had the pleasure of at least being near Lois, seeing her, and occasionally exchanging a few words with her. Sometimes he was not quite so sure that it was a pleasure, when he saw the devotion of the city men who, in his humility, he thought might easily stand a better chance with a young girl than a semi-rustic Southerner, as he called himself. The term was a misnomer, for there was a chivalrous courtesy and high-bred deference in the Southerner's

manner, which, while not at all cosmopolitan, was far from rustic, and made him at once a favorite with every woman he met.

But he did have one pleasure that he could never hope to have at Gale, at least until Lois was a Junior, when, if he was so fortunate as to be invited to the "Junior Prom," he might hope for it. One of Margaret's friends was to give a large dance, which would close the holiday festivities, as they must start the next day for Norwood. Margaret had secured an invitation for Mr. Hamilton, and as soon as he heard of it he at once asked Lois for as many dances as she was willing to give him. He secured two—a waltz and a two-step, but he could not persuade her to give him more, if for no other reason than that she felt it would be unfair to the men who had been so kind to her throughout her visit. "But," she said, laughingly, "if you should discover that I am in danger of being a wall-flower, I am quite willing you should rescue me. I can think of no more dreadful fate." He did not feel that gave him much cause for hope, but he said he would take her at her word; and when the night of the dance arrived, he would not fill his card until he had seen hers.

It was as he feared—all taken, even down to the long string of extras, which there was little hope would be danced, but he saw she had written his name for the second waltz and the last two-step on the regular program, and thanked her. And when their waltz came the music was so entrancing, and their steps suited each other so perfectly, he could have wished it might go on forever, and was half inclined to rebel when it ended so soon. It proved to be his only dance with her, too, for when it came time for his two-step, and he hunted her up, he found her in a tête-à-tête room with one of the New York men he was inclined to feel especially jealous of. The young man made a hasty adieu when Mr. Hamilton came up, and he noticed Lois looked pale and tired. He had been looking forward eagerly to that dance ever since the first one ended, but when he saw how pale she looked, he said, "You are tired, Miss Darcy; would you rather stay where you are than dance?"

"If you don't mind," said Lois; "I am tired," and something in her manner made Mr. Hamilton think that "that fellow Howe" had been saying something disagreeable. He

could not question her, of course; but he sat down near her and devoted himself to making her forget it, whatever it might be; and he had the satisfaction of seeing her manner, which had been distrait and embarrassed at first, gradually return to its natural brightness. And he was not sure but it was better than dancing, to be sitting there, talking so quietly with her, in that flower-embowered room, and she looking like the Queen of the Flowers in her dress of shimmering pink.

Mrs. Baker and a young man came in together and interrupted their tête-à-tête; the young man to claim Lois for his dance, the first of the extras, and Mrs. Baker to propose that as she and Margaret were to return to college the next day, and it was already late, they should go home. Lois was glad to go, although she expressed a suitable regret to the disappointed young man. Then Mrs. Baker turned to Mr. Hamilton, and offered him the extra seat in the carriage, and, of course, he accepted it gladly; and as the ride was a long one, he saw more of Lois than he had seen in his whole New York visit.

The next day the two girls returned to Nor-

wood, and Mr. Hamilton had Mrs. Davis's permission to accompany them. It was a pleasant little trip, with Mr. Hamilton to look after them and entertain them, and it made a pleasant ending of the holidays, Lois and Margaret both thought.

They were all over now, and Lois was hard at work at her studies, and practicing for the Glee Club concert. That was the great event of the spring term, and one of the rare occasions on which they could invite men; and, of course, Lois had invited Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Beacher.

It had seemed to Lois that the spring would never come. Accustomed to the early flowers and foliage and warm, sunny spring weather of her home, she could hardly be patient through the bleak and chilly days that made her long for St. Mark's. But the spring came at last suddenly. Almost in a day they sprang from the bareness and bleakness of winter to full leafage and balmy air. It was the miracle of the northern spring that Lois had never seen and was not prepared for. It was the kiss of the Sun-god, Sigurd, waking into sudden life the sleeping earth, Brunhild. Into new life,

too, the girls of Gale, who spent every afternoon from four to six and all the half holidays in long tramps through the woods in search of flowers, or on the hills for the lovely arbutus, or in rowing and tennis. Every evening now from six-thirty to seven the Glee Club was practicing—every evening but Tuesday, when the College prayer-meeting met, and Lois would not have failed to be present there, for that was one of the things her mother had talked to her about on that last night in Norwood; and while religious feeling was hardly yet fully awake in Lois, religious principle was strong within her. There was plenty of good, hard study, too, in the spring term, and with her two hours of practice in music every day, Lois found her time fully occupied. She liked it, though; she liked to feel she had something for every minute; it made the days rush by so fast; and as a part of it was good, wholesome exercise, she was not suffering in health.

There were two surprises in store for Lois on the night of the concert, one of them was pleasant—a great bunch of Catherine Mermet roses from Mr. Hamilton; the other she did not enjoy. She had dashed off one evening a few

rhymes as a parody on "When the Matin Bells are Ringing." They suggested themselves irresistibly to her, and she put them down. Miss Felton, the leader of the Glee Club, seized upon them, saying they would sing them at the concert. Lois did not object to that; she was rather proud Miss Felton should think them good enough; but she was very much disconcerted when they appeared on the program with her name attached. She knew they were silly rhymes, and she did not care to claim their authorship, but there they were, written out in full:

When the matin bell is ringing, Ah me, O, Ah me, O,
From my iron bedstead springing, Ah me, O, Ah me,
More than half asleep, loudly yawning,
Much inclined to weep, day is dawning,
To my room-mate sadly sighing, Ah me, O, Ah me,
For those dragons drear, Greek and Latin,
Loom up large and near, in the matin,
Hope within me lies a-dying, Ah me, O, Ah me!

When the day in closing o'er us, Uralio, Uralio,
And our spreads are all before us, Uralio, Urali,
When we one and all, quit our reading,
And adown the hall, odors leading,
Sweetly to Welsh rarebit bear us, Uralio, Uralio,
Where the merry maids with golden tresses,
Where no "prod" invades, savory messes
Out of toast and cheese prepare us, Uralio, Urali!

And there were Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Beacher, she could see by peeping from behind the scenes, sitting only two or three rows from the front, reading the verses together and laughing over them. Lois felt her cheeks flame scarlet.

The members of the Glee Club were all in white, and they made a very pretty picture as they filed on the stage, each wearing the flowers that pleased her, or that had been sent her. Lois wore Mr. Hamilton's roses, and she caught his eye as she entered. He slightly waved his program in salute, and she smiled a little in response. After that she tried not to see him, lest it should disconcert her, and she wanted to attend strictly to business. "The Matin Bells" was loudly encored. Lois was sure it was Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Beacher doing it out of compliment to her, and not because it was good, and did not want to respond; but Miss Felton insisted that the cutest part of the song was in the encore. Lois had written it as a second chorus, to be repeated after the last verse, and Miss Felton had saved it for the encore, which she was sure would come. So they went out and repeated the last stanza, only, instead of "Uralio," etc., they sang as a chorus:

Happy me, O, happy me,
Come to tea, O, come to tea!

Finishing with one girl saying, not singing, "And chocolate!" Another added, "And Welsh rarebit!" A third, "And plowed field!" And a fourth, "Or fudges!" When they all joined in together again:

Happy me, O happy me,
Come to tea, O, come to tea!

For such silly words it did produce an astonishing effect, quite bringing down the house, though, as Lois said afterward, when some one complimented her on the authorship, "Oh! it was all in the singing, not at all in the words. I think the girls did sing it well."

After "The Matin Bells," came Lois's solo. Mr. Hamilton leaned a little forward as she stepped out from the line of girls in white. She was apparently quite calm and self-possessed, but there was a flickering color in her cheeks, that were otherwise paler than usual, and her eyes were like stars—signs that Mr. Hamilton had already learned were tokens of great excitement with her. It was strange he had never heard her sing alone; he had heard her sing college songs on Mt. Hoaryhead and on the



LOIS STEPPED OUT FROM THE LINE OF GIRLS

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sleigh-rides, and hymns in her mother's sitting-room and at vespers, but always with others. He had not failed to notice and admire the pure, sweet quality of her voice, but it had been a great surprise to him to see her name on the program for a solo. She had always seemed so young and girlish, and he trembled for her, imagining her tremors as she came before that great audience, and fearing it might overcome her. The song was a pretty little Polish love song—"Were I the Sunlight," in waltz time. There was a "zum-la-la" accompaniment by the rest of the Club, that had several bars to itself before Lois began. She stood in a half-listening attitude, her head slightly thrown back, the round, white throat, the flower-like head poised upon it, rising above a billow of soft lace. In her hands, crossed lightly in front of her, she held one of Mr. Hamilton's roses. Just at the right moment of the accompaniment, her voice struck in, clear, full, rich, without a tremor. Mr. Hamilton's tension insensibly relaxed. He had no fears now; he could give himself up to the enjoyment of listening. There was a vibrating, violin quality in the middle register of Lois's voice that produced the effect of infinite tenderness

and pathos in the simple words, while the higher notes soared clear and sweet as the song of the skylark. It was wonderful for a mere girl, and the applause was unremitting, until it was evident she would respond to the encore. Lois herself was startled and half frightened; she had not expected such a demonstration; and the first notes of the encore were a little tremulous. There was a humming accompaniment this time, very soft and sweet, as she sang:—

"I feel thy presence ever; thy spirit dwells with me,
Where'er my eyes may wander, thy face in dreams I see,
Sink'st thou in thought's wide ocean, as sinks the western sun,
So with the morn thou'lt rise, when night's dark hours are done."

There was only that one stanza in the song; but she repeated the last line, and when she came to "hours," instead of striking B-flat of the middle register, she soared up and dropped down lightly on B in alt, where she held the tone, clear, pure, sustained, until the whole house was breathless, when she dropped softly to the A and G just below. This time there was really no bounds to the delight of the audience, but to a repeated encore she responded only with her smile and bow, graceful and natural, but a little

timid; she had not yet learned stage manners. The concert closed with "Fair Gale," ever the best beloved of songs in that audience, and always sure of a royal welcome. Friends crowded around Lois, glowing with praise and congratulations, until she would not have been mortal if her heart had not swelled with something very like pride. Mr. Hamilton was among the first to approach her, but he only said: "May I walk over to the Harvey with you when you are ready to go?" And at her smile and nod he drew back and let the others crowd around her. On the way over, he said: "You must let me thank you for the very great pleasure you have given me to-night."

"Do you know," said Lois, "what I was thinking all the time I was singing? If mamma could only be there to hear me. And I sang the words right to her:

> "Were I a bird, love, I would be softly trilling,
> Ever thy heart with tender love notes thrilling."

He was glad to hear Lois say that; there was nothing he liked in her more than her love and loyalty to her mother; and yet he had hoped he might have had just a little part in that song. He saw now how utterly foolish his hopes were;

but he answered gravely, "I have no doubt she was there in spirit."

"I felt just as if she was," said Lois, and once I almost thought I saw her, sitting just behind you. It gave me a great start, for, for a moment, I was sure it was she, and she was looking at me with such sweet, sad eyes."

"And that reminds me," said Mr. Hamilton, "you must not let me forget to give you a letter I have in my pocket for you. I don't know your mother's writing, but it is postmarked 'St. Mark's.' I stopped at the office on the way to the concert, and as I knew a western mail had come in since the delivery, I took the liberty of inquiring for you."

"You are very kind," said Lois; "it is not my day for a letter from mamma, but perhaps she thought she would send me an extra one on account of the concert."

But when Mr. Hamilton had extracted the letter from an inner pocket, it proved not to be from her mother, but from Mabel Colton. "It will have news of mamma," said Lois, "and that will be almost as good."

Mr. Hamilton lingered a little in the Harvey parlors; he wanted to talk to her about a

party he was getting up the next week to go to Whitby Glen; but the girls had crowded about her again, and Miss Belden, coming out of her room to congratulate Lois very sweetly indeed, at which Lois flushed with pleasure, he saw there was going to be no chance to see her, and so decided to write her about it instead. He found a chance, however, just before he left, to say to her: "I think I will write your mother an account of the concert; she might like to hear how it impressed one of the audience, an entirely unprejudiced listener."

And Lois answered him with shining eyes: "Oh! thank you; I wish you would. I know how much pleasure it would give her."

CHAPTER XIX

A LETTER FROM ST. MARK'S

THE girls who had accompanied Lois to her room, and lingered to talk over the events of the evening, had all left her. She had taken off her pretty dress and laid it carefully away, with her gloves and slippers and fan, and had put on some comfortable bedroom slippers and a dressing-gown, and there was still time before ten o'clock to read her letter, thanks to the early hours at Gale. Carefully as Mabel had worded her letter, that Lois might not be too greatly alarmed, it struck terror to her heart at once. Her mother ill, too ill to write herself, and so ill that Dr. Colton advised her coming home as soon as she could conveniently—what could it mean? It seemed to Lois to mean the very worst possible. There was no middle ground for her; her apprehension, quickly aroused where her mother was concerned, had leaped over all moderate possibilities, and was picturing vividly to her alarmed consciousness the last dreadful stage.

For a few moments she sat motionless, frozen by the chill of terror, with wide-open, awful eyes, as one who saw the invisible, and was turned to marble by the sight. Then she realized that she must act quickly, if she hoped to reach that precious mother before it was too late; and instantly every faculty was keenly awake. Her heart turned at once to Margaret, as the one who could help her in the hour of need, and the event proved the justness of Mrs. Darcy's estimate of her, when she had coveted her as a friend for Lois.

When Margaret saw the white, drawn look on Lois's face as she entered, that seemed to change her at once from a child to a suffering woman; she went to her swiftly and took her in her arms, as she said, "My poor darling, what is it?"

Lois was shivering now, shaking so that she could only utter one word, "Mamma," as she held the letter toward Margaret to read.

Margaret glanced over it quickly, just enough to see the purport of it, then she turned again to the shivering girl: "Lois, darling, you must not be so frightened. I do not believe she is so ill as you think, or they would have telegraphed you.

Now you must get over this chill the first thing, or you will not even be able to go to your mother. You must lie down on my divan, and I will cover you up warm, and go to Mrs. Scranton and get something for you. I will tell Miss Belden to come and see you, and she can help us decide what to do."

"I think I know what to do, Margaret; only help me to get over this chill, so that I can do it," said Lois.

And she meekly submitted to lie down and be covered up, while Margaret hurried away for help. Mrs. Scranton came herself, quickly followed by a maid with hot water and mustard; and she was kindness itself, administering remedies, and preparing a foot-bath which she was sure would relieve the nervous tension.

The rigors were already less severe and less frequent when Miss Belden came in, and her quiet way and tender words helped to complete the cure Mrs. Scranton had begun. "Lois, dear," she said, as she kissed her and took her hand, "you must not lose your courage; you will lose your strength if you do, and you will need it all for your mother."

She sat beside her on the divan with her arm

close about her, and with the warmth and support the bodily contact gave her, Lois soon grew quiet.

"How kind you all are to me," she murmured gratefully, as Mrs. Scranton and Miss Belden together wrapped her feet in hot flannels, and covered her up warmly on the divan; and then, suddenly missing Margaret, she inquired where she was.

"I sent her over to see the President," said Miss Belden; "we both thought his advice and his permission would be necessary for any steps we might take. We also thought it was quite possible that you were not supplied with money for such a sudden journey, and unfortunately neither Margaret nor I had more than a dollar or two."

Lois crimsoned as she answered, "I do not see why they did not send me money; they must have forgotten it. Don't you think that looks as if they were greatly distressed, Miss Belden?"

But Miss Belden was not willing to put the worst construction on anything. "It was very easy to forget that, when they were only thinking of the main fact," she said.

Yet it was an unpardonable omission. Not one of them at home thought of it until the morning after the letter was sent; then it suddenly occurred to the doctor and he rushed down to the bank and sent Lois a check for twice the amount necessary, hoping it might reach her in time.

Margaret came in in a few minutes, bringing with her the President; and with him was his wife, who had insisted on coming to see if she could not do something for Miss Darcy. When Lois saw the lovely little woman, with the sweet, motherly face, whom she so much admired, but whom she knew only very slightly, she flushed and rose quickly to a sitting posture. Mrs. Seton sat down beside her, put her arms around her, and only said, "My poor child!" But the kiss of one who was almost a stranger set free the tears; for a few moments Lois rested her head on that motherly heart, and wept unrestrainedly.

"I would not try to stop her," whispered Miss Belden; "they are her first tears, and they will do her good."

Lois checked them herself very soon, and then the good doctor, who, like any only ordi-

nary man, had been embarrassed and constrained at the sight of tears, drew up a chair in front of her and, taking her hand in his, looked at her with those kind eyes that Lois always thought were almost the most beautiful she had ever seen, and said to her, "My dear Miss Darcy, we are very sorry for you; but we do not want you to feel there is no help for you anywhere in this time of trouble. We are all ready and eager to help you to the uttermost of our ability, and how much more able, and far more willing is your Heavenly Father?"

"Oh! I know, I know," murmured Lois, looking at him with swimming eyes.

"Then, my dear Miss Darcy, just lay all your sorrow down. He will take it up and bear it for you. And I do not believe you have cause for such terrible apprehension. Remember the letter was written two days ago, and if there had been any alarming change for the worse, you would have had a telegram before this. Your mother is ill and needs you, and it is right you should go to her at once; but you must go with a strong heart, if you are going to help her to get well; and we all hope and believe that she will get well."

Lois's lip was quivering, and the tears were ready to fall, and the doctor hurried on:

"I brought over the time-tables; you go by the C. & O., do you not?" And he took a folder from his pocket.

Lois managed to say "Yes."

"Then we will look up your first train, and see that you are ready to take it."

"I think there must be one that goes early in the morning," said Lois, "to connect with the Limited at St. Albans, and it will get me into St. Mark's by the evening of the day after to-morrow."

"Yes," he said, "it goes through Somerfield at nine o'clock; you will have to take the seven-thirty train from here to catch it, and you will have a little over three-quarters of an hour in Somerfield. And now it is late, and you will want to commence your packing immediately. Mrs. Scranton, will you send the janitor to bring Miss Darcy's trunks to her room? And will you see that she has something nice and hot for breakfast at about a quarter before seven? And as she will be up late to-night, I think it will do her good to have a cup of tea and a little lunch now. She has been through a great strain this evening.

And now about money," he said. "I do not suppose you have much with you."

Lois tried to say she could not understand why they had not sent her money, but he interrupted her.

"Oh! I understand perfectly; they simply did not think of it. But I think I shall be able to supply your needs. If you were not starting so early in the morning there would be no trouble, of course. Can you tell me what it costs to go to St. Mark's?"

Then Lois told him the cost of the ticket and the sleeper.

"Well," he said, "I think we can manage that," and he took out a roll of bills.

Lois was feeling painfully embarrassed that she should be obliged to call upon others for money to get home.

The doctor noticed it, and said: "You must not feel at all uncomfortable, Miss Darcy; it is only what I would be glad to do for any one of my girls at such a time. I should not hesitate to call upon you for a temporary accommodation if I happened to be in imperative need of it, and knew you could furnish it."

As he rose to go Lois very quietly and earnestly

thanked him for all his kindness. He took her hand again and held it a minute, as he looked at her with that same beaming kindliness. "I shall see you in the morning, Miss Darcy, and Mrs. Seton will stay with you now and help you, if you would like to have her."

But neither Miss Belden nor Margaret would hear to that; that was their own special privilege, and Mrs. Seton, putting her arms again around Lois, said a few words to her that were so kind and comforting it almost seemed to her it was her mother saying them.

The packing was all done; Mrs. Scranton and Miss Belden were gone; after seeing Lois safely in bed, only Margaret, who had settled herself very comfortably on Lois's divan for the night, was left; the little single beds could not, by any possibility, be made to hold two. Lois sank at once into a heavy sleep, from which she woke in an hour and lay awake for the rest of the night, longing for the morning, that she might be on her way, and picturing to herself sad scenes that might at that moment be enacting in far St. Mark's. At the earliest light she was up and moving softly about the room that she might not disturb Margaret. She was almost dressed before Mar-

garet awoke. She was going to accompany Lois to Somerfield and see her on the C. & O. train, for which she had the President's permission. Now she found she had to hurry to be ready. The janitor came in and strapped Lois's trunks, and the maid came up to tell her breakfast was ready. She put the last things in her bag and turned to leave the little room she had entered nearly five months ago in tears, and was leaving now with a heavy heart. Margaret and Miss Belden took breakfast with her, and urged her, if possible, to eat, and she did try her best. At the station Dr. Seton was waiting for them, and he bought the tickets, attended to her trunks, and tried to send her off cheerfully. Poor Lois! she appreciated so much all that her kind friends were doing for her, and yet her heart was so full she did not know how to express her appreciation.

Just as they were ready to get on the train, Mr. Hamilton came up. He was startled to see Lois evidently going away, and Dr. Seton and Miss Belden down to see her off; but when he saw her face he was shocked. Margaret whispered a word of explanation to him, and, in his quiet way, he took it all in at once, and went about

making himself as useful as possible. He was just taking the train for New Haven, to meet a friend at Yale, and so would accompany Lois and Margaret as far as Somerfield. Miss Belden introduced Mr. Hamilton to Dr. Seton, who looked at him a little suspiciously, but made no open objection to his accompanying them to Somerfield, although he refused the young man's offer to relieve him of Lois's bag, and himself saw her on board the train and comfortably seated, and said a last kind word to her.

As the train pulled out, and the President and Miss Belden walked up the street toward the college, he said:

"Who is that young Hamilton? Do you know him?"

"Oh! yes," said Miss Belden, "and like him very much. He is a Houghton man."

"But how does he happen to be going to Somerfield this morning with Miss Darcy?"

"Why that, I fancy, is pure accident. He was over to attend the concert last night, and I understand he is going to New Haven this morning. He is thoroughly trustworthy, I am sure, and his only fault is that I am afraid he is very fond of Lois."

"Is that a fault?"

"Oh! yes, Lois is too young to have anybody in love with her."

"Lois—what an odd name," said the doctor, musingly. "And how beautiful she looked last night, and how well she sang. Poor little girl! the world looks dark to her this morning. God grant her strength for the worst, if it must come, but spare her the worst, if it is His will," and Miss Belden said softly, "Amen!"

CHAPTER XX

A LONG JOURNEY

When Mr. Hamilton returned from helping Miss Belden off the car (she had come in to say a last word to Lois), he felt a little embarrassed. He was not quite sure Lois would want him to come and sit with them, and yet he wanted to very much. She had not spoken a word to him this morning; she had only given him her hand silently in answer to his greeting, and it was hard to interpret her silence. Was she unable to speak, or did she mean to intimate she would like to be left alone? He went forward, and stood by the seat they were occupying. He would try to discover if it would be disagreeable to her to have him with her. They were in a double seat; the two girls seated side by side on one, and Lois's bag and umbrella on the other. Lois was sitting with her head turned from him, looking out of the window. He spoke to Miss Baker.

"How long will you have to wait in Somerfield before the C. & O. train comes?"

Margaret looked up at him, and before she answered his question, said: "Won't you sit down, Mr. Hamilton?" moving Lois's bag as she spoke, to make room for him.

He hesitated a moment, waiting for some sign from Lois, and Lois insensibly perceiving it, turned and met his glance.

"Would you like to have me, Miss Darcy?"

"Very much," she said simply, and then, as he sat down, and Margaret answered his question, Lois turned again to her window. She was watching the views as they slipped by her, and thinking of the day when she and her mother had first seen them together from that same car window. Especially she was watching Mt. Hoaryhead and Mt. Ben gliding away from them in stately curves, and wondering if she would ever see them again, and with her mother by her side. She was glad Mr. Hamilton was there to entertain Margaret; now she felt she need not talk; she could look and think all she wanted to. She knew Mr. Hamilton was going to New Haven; he would go right on in the same train, she supposed. She would like to tell him one thing before he left them, that if he had not brought her that letter last night she would not

have received it until this morning—too late to catch the fast train, and it would have made nearly twenty-four hours' difference in her reaching home. She would like him to know how he had helped her, but she was afraid to trust her voice to speak to him about it. Several times on the way to Somerfield she turned from the window and joined in the conversation a little. She thought she ought to be polite, and every time she met in Mr. Hamilton's eyes such a kind, strong look, as if he was saying, almost as plainly as if in words, "I am so sorry for you, and I would help you bear it if I could."

In Somerfield they all got out, and Lois stopped at the waiting-room door, and turned to say good-bye to Mr. Hamilton; but he said, quickly, "I am not going on to New Haven; I will be here till you go." Lois tried to remonstrate with him, that he must not lose his train on her account, but she made no impression; he only said, "I can take a train at any time." He found some seats for them in the waiting-room, and then went off to buy Lois's ticket to St. Mark's, check her trunks, and engage her sleeper.

"I am glad he is here," said Margaret, as he walked away; "it is very comfortable to have a

man about when you are traveling. Isn't it odd, this is the second time he has traveled with us. I begin to feel as if he was a big brother. I like him so much, Lois."

"Do you?" said Lois, innocently. "So do I, and so does mamma, and I believe Miss Belden does too. I guess everybody does."

"And since he is here, Lois, if you don't mind, I think I will take the 8.50 train back to Norwood, instead of waiting until 10.50. It will be only ten minutes before you leave, and Mr. Hamilton will see you on board the train."

"Oh! yes, Margaret dear; I would not have you wait here alone for two hours just to see me off. I do not need any one. I will have my tickets and my checks, and it will be no trouble just to step aboard. Mr. Hamilton need not wait, either. Tell him so, Margaret, please."

"I will, if you want me to, but I would rather know he was here to see you safely on your train. And then I know my telling him won't have any effect."

Mr. Hamilton came back with Lois's purse, and made his report, showing her where he had put her railroad tickets, where her sleeping-car ticket, and where her checks; and then Mar-

garet asked him to go with her to the ticket office to make some inquiries about some other trains. It was only a pretext; she said as soon as they left Lois: "You are going to be here until Lois's train leaves?"

"Yes," he said, in a hesitating way.

"Then I am going back on the 8.50. It will save me two hours of waiting, and if you are with Lois, I shall feel perfectly comfortable about her."

He turned to her quickly.

"You are very good, Miss Baker. How can I thank you?"

"Am I?" she said, with a little smile. "But why?"

He could not tell her, of course, but he said, "You are so good that I will tell you what I would like to do—what I am desperately tempted to do. I cannot endure the thought of Miss Darcy taking that long journey alone. Did you ever see such a look in any one's eyes? I tell you her heart is breaking, and to be entirely alone with that awful sorrow, it is cruel to allow it."

"Oh! I know, Mr. Hamilton, and my heart aches when I think of her. If you could have

seen her last night"—and then she told him a little of the suffering Lois had been through. "But what can we do," she finished. He had listened intently, with a determined look in his eyes.

"Do?" he said; "I shall go to St. Mark's with her. She need not look at me or speak to me if she does not want to, but I shall be near her to watch her and help her if she needs it."

"Oh! but Mr. Hamilton, that is impossible," Margaret spoke quickly.

"I know what you would say; there are the proprieties to be considered, though sometimes I wish—" he did not finish his sentence. "No one need ever know that I have gone but you and her. I shall see her in a carriage for home when we reach St. Mark's, and take the next train back. Don't you think, Miss Baker, there is sometimes a higher law than the proprieties?"

"Yes, but—" Margaret was hesitating. He was so vehement it was difficult to say anything. "If—if—you were only—her brother."

His face flushed a deep crimson. "I know what you are thinking, and would that I were. But do you think I would intrude myself or my

hopes at such a time? It would be cruel, besides being very poor policy," he added, with a half smile. "She has no thought for any one but her mother; and then, too, she is very young and away from her mother. I have always remembered that, and tried never to say a word to her that she would think was more than friendly. It has been hard work, sometimes, and I am afraid I have been almost too successful; I don't want to be lumped with all her other friends, as just a nice fellow, those New York men and the rest; but I am afraid I am."

He had been hurrying her along toward the town, as they talked, and now he stopped in front of a fruit store.

"Will you wait here a minute?" he said. "I want to get her some fruit."

With a quick hand, and a tone that made the man in charge fly to do his bidding, in five minutes he had selected and filled a basket with fine, juicy oranges, a few russet apples, some bananas, and a pretty paper box of strawberries, imported from the south, but large, sweet, and luscious.

"Now," he said, as he received the basket,

"we must hurry back. We have left Lois a long time alone."

Margaret did not remark on the use of her name. She did not think he knew he had used it. She was not quite satisfied with their conversation, however, and she returned to it.

"Mr. Hamilton, Lois asked me to tell you you must not wait for her train. She could easily go on board alone."

"Did she?" he said, looking straight ahead.

"Yes, and do you suppose she would let you go to St. Mark's?"

"Oh! no; I never supposed so for an instant; but I shall not ask her," looking down at her with a smile in his blue eyes.

"Well, then, I wash my hands of it all. I do not see that I can help it, and I am glad that there will be somebody to take care of Lois; and do try to make her eat; I don't believe she has eaten or slept a thing since she received that letter."

"It shall be my first duty to try to make her sleep something, and eat an hour or two," he replied, gravely.

Margaret laughed. "I am just like my grandmother; she was always twisting every-

thing. She said to my Uncle Harry once, when she thought he was not showing her sufficient respect and gratitude, 'Oh! sharper than a serpent's child to have a thankless tooth!' and then was indignant when we all laughed."

They had walked so fast that Margaret was all out of breath when she came back to Lois. Mr. Hamilton was not with her. He had stopped to put his basket of fruit in the parcel room. "I did not mean to be gone so long; have you been lonely, Lois?"

"No, I have not been lonely, but it is a long time to wait, when you are in such a hurry to get on. Where is Mr. Hamilton, Margaret? Did you tell him not to wait, and is he gone? I wanted to see him and thank him and say good-bye."

"No, he has not gone," said Margaret, "he insists on waiting for your train."

She did not say how much more he insisted upon, she would let him manage that for himself.

He came up presently to say, "Your train is coming, Miss Baker. I will see you on board." Then the good-byes had to be said, and at the

last moment, Lois clung to Margaret. It seemed to her like letting go her last support. The next two days were a black and awful gulf she was plunging into alone. "Oh! if she could only go with me!" she thought, but would not say it. She held her tightly a moment, and whispered, "Good-bye. If I never see you again, I will always love you."

"Oh! little sister, don't say that. You will be back next fall, and your mother with you."

The tears were running down Margaret's face, and even after she was seated in the car she could not quite control them; and there was a mist in Mr. Hamilton's blue eyes as he grasped her hand and said good-bye. He took a hasty turn up and down the platform before he came back to Lois; but when he did come in, he thought he had never seen a more desolate looking little figure. She seemed to feel as if her last friend had left her.

He came in with a smile. "I am going to ask you to walk up and down the platform with me until time for your train. You will be shut up, with no chance for air or exercise for two days; and I think it will do you good to get both now."

She rose immediately, her forlorn look a little lightened. It was a clear, cool morning for May, almost a hint of frost in the air, and Mr. Hamilton was glad to see a little color come into her face, and a little brightness into her eyes as they walked. As for him, sincerely sorry as he felt for her, and his big heart ached with sympathy, there was, besides, a feeling of exultant joy. For the first time in his acquaintance, he had her entirely to himself. She was his for a little while. She would have no one but him to look to for comfort and help, and it gave him an exquisite sense of ownership and protection as he looked down on the little figure in the pretty blue skirt and jacket, and the inevitable, but becoming, shirt-waist and sailor hat.

His courage had failed him when he came to buy his ticket. After all, he had no right to inflict himself on Lois, if it should prove to be disagreeable, much as she might need him. So he took a ticket only for St. Albans, hoping that before they should get there, he would have convinced her of the necessity and perfect propriety of his accompanying her all the way to St. Mark's. Besides his feeling that Lois was

in no condition for so long a journey without some one near to help and comfort her, he had the southern idea of the danger and impropriety of a young girl traveling unattended, and also a Southerner's lack of appreciation of the *convenances* that would have forbidden a Northern man from thinking of offering himself as escort.

Their train drew up, and he helped Lois aboard, and found her seat for her in the sleeper. He sat down beside her a moment, noticing with another delightful feeling of isolation how the high-backed seats shut them off from the rest of the car almost as completely as if they had been in a separate compartment, and noticing also how few other passengers were aboard. The heavy western travel had evidently not yet set in. He went out in a few minutes and returned just as the train was starting, with his basket of fruit and a bundle of magazines and papers. He put them down beside Lois, and she looked up at him in surprise.

"What a beautiful basket of fruit! Is it all for me?"

"All for you, unless you should feel inclined to give me some," and he settled himself in the

seat opposite, with the air of one intending to stay.

She looked at him wonderingly, not comprehending him at all; and then, observing that the train was moving almost imperceptibly, she said, quickly, "We are moving, Mr. Hamilton. Oh! hurry, please, or you will be carried on."

The moment had come, and he must take his courage in hand; so bracing himself inwardly, he said, with as indifferent an air as he could assume, "I intend to be carried on. You do not mind, do you?"

But the look of terror with which Lois said, "Oh! yes; please hurry, Mr. Hamilton; it isn't too late; you can get off yet if you try," made him half repent of his rashness.

In her eagerness she had put her hand on his arm as if to push him away. It was no caressing gesture, but he liked to feel it there. Their seat was at the rear near the state-room, and behind Lois was a mirror that commanded the whole length of the car. He glanced up in it. There was no one seated near them, and no one looking their way; every back was turned. He boldly took the little gloved hand that was still unconsciously pushing him in his, and held it

firmly while he said: "Listen to me a moment, Miss Darcy. If you look out of the window you will see that I leave the train now at the risk of my life; but that is nothing. If you say so I am willing to take the risk. Shall I?"

Lois glanced hurriedly out and saw that they were already moving rapidly. "Oh! no, no!" she said, struggling to release her hand; "but why did you stay?"

"I will tell you, if you will listen quietly," he said, by which he must have meant, "if you will let your hand lie quietly in mine," for otherwise she was perfectly still. "You believe I am your very sincere and very true friend; do you not?"

"Yes," said Lois, in a half whisper, as he evidently waited for an answer.

"You believe there is nothing a brother could do for a sister that I would not do for you?"

"Yes," again, very faintly.

"Now, do you suppose if you were really my little sister I could let you go off alone on such a long journey, with your heart so full of sorrow, and my own almost breaking with sympathy for you?"

"But what would Dr. Seton say?" said Lois, still half under her breath.

"I know what you are thinking; you are thinking that if Dr. Seton knew that I was with you, he would think it was an arranged plan, and that you were betraying his trust."

"Yes," said Lois, "and I could not bear to have him think that, he is so good and kind."

"Well, in the first place, I do not think that Dr. Seton will ever know anything about it, unless you would like to have me write to him and explain it, which I am quite willing to do; and in the second place, I think, if he knew, he would be very glad that you were to have a friend with you to take care of you, and see you safely home." He added the last words with a purpose. They were intended as a feeler. Lois was terrified again.

"You are not going all the way to St. Mark's?"

"Not if you will not let me. I want to go very much; I have taken my ticket only for St. Albans, but I hope before we reach St. Albans you will decide to let me go all the way with you. We will not discuss it now, please," he said, quickly, as she began a decided refusal.

He had kept a strict watch on the mirror, and he saw the conductor enter the other end of the car and come toward them, and he gently released her hand. "And now," he said, "shall I go or stay? I can get off at the next stop, you know."

"You may stay, if you like," said Lois timidly, "as far as St. Albans."

"Thank you. You have been generous, and I will try to be too. I have a seat somewhere in this car," looking around, and then, with the air of making a discovery, "Oh! it is Number Two, just opposite. Now, if it will be pleasanter for you, I will leave you to yourself; or if my seat is too near I will go forward into the smoking compartment; but I will be at hand if you need me for anything."

He made a movement as if to go; but waited nevertheless.

"Do you want to smoke?" asked Lois.

"No, I don't smoke; but I don't want to bother you."

"Then I would rather you would stay here. I like to feel that—" She started to say, "you are near me," but changed it hastily to "some one I know is near me," and then she received from

those kind blue eyes a rare smile that she had seen in them once or twice before, and it had always set her pulses to fluttering—a smile of thanks, of protection, of something else, she didn't quite know what.

"And now," he said, "since you give me permission to take care of you—"

"I did not know that I had," she interrupted, with a little of her old sauciness, and he hailed it as a sign of returning spirits.

"Certainly," he continued, "but don't interrupt, please; since you have requested me to look after your material comforts, I recommend that you try your strawberries at once. I hear that you have eaten no breakfast, and that is a bad way to begin a long journey."

He went forward somewhere, and returned in a few minutes with a cup of sugar to dip her berries in.

"But you will eat some, too," she said, "remember you asked me to give you some."

"That will necessitate another cup."

"I will make you one and give you a part of my sugar; haven't you an envelope in your pocket?"

He put his hand in his pocket and drew out

an envelope, which he hastily returned, but not before Lois had recognized her own writing. She had never written him but one note, and that was long ago, about the sleigh-ride—very long ago, indeed, it seemed to Lois, and he was still carrying it with him. She blushed a little, and he, watching for a sign that she had seen the note, saw the blush and knew that she had recognized it; and he was not sorry. He took out another envelope, a business one that he had received the day before, and she fashioned a little cup out of it, and they ate their berries together—Lois rather surprised to find that she could eat; but the luscious fruit with its slight tartness was very refreshing. With the pleasant talk that accompanied it, she found her spirits were insensibly rising, and she reproached herself that anything could divert her for even a moment from her great sorrow. But Mr. Hamilton was very much afraid of making himself tiresome, and so losing his chance of going all the way to St. Mark's. He thought it wise, therefore, after awhile, to leave her to herself for a little, and taking one of the magazines, he went forward to the smoking compartment, and tried to read. He found it hard

work; there was always before his eyes the little figure in the other part of the car. She had taken off her hat after entering the car, and he could see on the printed page before him the drooping head with its thick waves of bronze gold hair, the sorrowful dark eyes, the pathetic curve that did not belong to the sweet mouth. After awhile he stopped trying to read; he "let himself go," as he phrased it; let himself feel the thrill of being near her, and, in a way, her protector; and then he wondered if she would let him go all the way to St. Mark's, whether he would be able to keep himself thoroughly in hand, and never say a word that was more than friendly; and then he found himself dreaming more daring dreams. It was the way to make time pass swiftly, and he was surprised when the porter came in and announced, "First call to dinner; dinner now ready in the dining car." He went back to Lois at once. He found her looking out of the car window with all the old sadness back again in her face, and he concluded it was not good for her to be alone.

"Dinner is ready," he said, "and we will go in at once; I think you must need something more substantial than strawberries by this time."

He had followed close behind the porter, and she had not noticed him until he spoke. As she looked up startled, he saw there were tears in her eyes, but she was trying to dispose of them furtively with her handkerchief, and he seemed not to see them.

Lois had intended to be as economical as possible in her journey, and so had thought she would depend on little lunches, and not patronize the dining car; besides feeling as if eating were not only an impossibility but a great impropriety in her present state of feeling. But she was embarrassed. She did not feel like disclosing her economical motives, and so she only made a feeble protest that she was not hungry; but he very quickly overruled that objection, and when she found herself seated opposite him at the nicely appointed table, with the beautiful New England mountains and rivers gliding by the wide window at her side, she decided to indulge in the extravagance with a good grace. She liked to see him order the dinner; she was not sure but that he had as much of the *savoir faire* as the New York men, when she saw what a dainty little menu he provided for her. And much to her surprise she found herself decoyed from one dainty little

course to another, eating quite heartily, and she was inclined to feel a little remorse on the subject, although she knew she felt the better for it. As they finished their dinner, nuts and all, she handed him her purse to pay for it, and he said: "You will surely let me be your host, Miss Darcy; you would not refuse a brother that little pleasure," and she, not quite knowing what to do in such a case, blushed brightly, and meekly returned her purse to her pocket.

Then they went back to their places in the sleeper, and he felt sorry it was a vestibuled train, so that she needed no steadying hand in crossing from one car to another. He sat down, this time beside her, and turned a little toward her, so that he shut her out from everybody else in the car. She had no idea where they were; but he knew they were nearing St. Albans, and then he told her so, and asked her if she was willing now that he should go on farther with her. She was sorry to lose him; he had comforted her greatly; and she hesitated a little, but presently she said, without lifting her eyes, and very softly: "I would rather not; I do not believe mamma would like it."

He said nothing for a moment; he was consid-

ering whether he should urge it more; but he decided it would not be manly, although he was a man who found it very hard to give up anything that he had set his heart upon. And she, fearing she had hurt him, looked up and said, shyly: "But I am very sorry we are so near St. Albans."

And then he found it very hard indeed to keep from saying the words that were trembling on his lips, ready to burst from them if he should loosen that iron grip for a moment; very hard not to catch the little hand that was lying so quietly in her lap, and ungloved now, and press it to his lips. He had to remind himself vigorously of his good resolutions, of the fact that she was so very young, and away from her mother. She thought him long in answering; when he did answer, he said: "You are very good to say you are sorry, and you know that to say your mother would not like it will always be potent with me. I will not worry you any more. I will go back from St. Albans."

Her brown eyes dropped again, not quite able to meet the look in the blue ones; and she thought she ought to be glad he was not going any further than St. Albans, and reproached

herself that she was not very glad. They were nearing East St. Albans, and he felt that the time was growing short.

"You will write me," he said, "a line, at least, to let me know how you find your mother, and of your own safe arrival?" She thought she ought to do that, and readily promised. "I hope and expect that you will be back in Norwood next fall; but if you are not, I shall surely see you again. Remember, wherever you are in the wide world, I shall see you; but it will make it much easier for me to find you, if you will once in awhile send me a little word to tell me where you are, and how you both are." Then she promised that, too, a little bit frightened at his manner; and then he went away to interview the porter, and returned, presently, and said: "We will be in St. Albans in a few minutes," and dropped into his old seat beside her. "Miss Darcy, I am not as good a man as I would like to be, but I am a firm believer in God and Christianity; and I have known moments when, but for the feeling that God was my Father, I should have been very wretched indeed. One of the very last things my mother ever gave me was a little book. She asked me to read it every

morning; I have not always done it; but I have always carried it with me, and somehow, when I have been in perplexity or trouble or sorrow, that little book has always seemed to have a special message for me. I have come to look upon it as a kind of magician, for the day's readings always seem to have a special reference to the day's need. I read the lesson this morning when I was in the smoking-room, and as I read it, I thought of you. I am going to leave my little book with you; I believe it will help you and comfort you; I want you to give it back to me some day, but not by mail, not until you can give it to me yourself."

He took out the little book from an inner pocket, and laid it in her hands. The train had come to a stop in the St. Albans' station. It was dark; he could only dimly see her face; there was great confusion of passing in and out. He got up. "I must go; good-bye." She gave him her hand, and he held it a moment; then, with a quick, strong pressure he dropped it, whispered "Heaven bless you!" and rushed from the car. She saw him once more as the train pulled out, standing on the platform and waving his hat to her. She waved her hand in response, and in a moment more she was whirled out of sight.

CHAPTER XXI

BACK TO LIFE

The afternoon was fast waning. It had seemed interminable to Lois, sitting with her eyes fixed on the quiet scenery of the beautiful Mohawk, she was as one who sees not. Her thoughts for awhile had been with that strong, graceful figure on the platform, his fair hair uncovered, his blue eyes smiling, waving her a farewell. She missed the cheer of his presence very much; he had been so kind and thoughtful, and he was so big and splendid looking, and inspired her always with such a feeling of trust.

But as the afternoon wore away she thought less of him and more of her mother. If she could only know how it was with her. Perhaps at this very moment there were messages with awful tidings for her, speeding over the very wires she was passing. And she could know nothing until she reached St. Mark's, and her whole soul cowered as her vivid fancy pictured what might be awaiting her there. And then

the long night and day that still lay between her and St. Mark's with no possibility of getting there one moment sooner. She was on one of the great New York Central flyers, but she felt as if they were creeping. Before she realized how far she was letting her imagination carry her, she was almost in an agony of terror and impatience and suspense. Then, suddenly she remembered Mr. Hamilton's little book. She turned to the reading for the day, May 15th, and read the Bible text: "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." And then she read the stanza below:

"Thy presence fills my mind with peace,
Brightens the thoughts so dark erewhile;
Bids cares and sad forebodings cease,
Makes all things smile."

And then she read Jean Nicolas Grou's comforting words of

"Martyrs, confessors, and saints, that have tasted this rest and counted themselves happy, in that they endured."

Lois read them and read them over again. Surely there was something almost weird in the book, that it should have on that very day the very message she needed. But what was that rest that could make them "count themselves

happy that they had endured"? It was something that she knew nothing about; she had been trying to be a Christian now for several years; she was sure she loved God, and wanted to do right, but that was as far as her simple creed had gone. Could there be anything that could "make all things smile" for her now when she was so nearly broken-hearted? "Bid sad forebodings cease," when her mind was full of most fearful visions? Yet there evidently was a faith that could take hold on God in just that way. She could not understand and she did not feel strong enough to try to grasp it. She was not ready to pray that she might be able to endure with joy. She could only pray, "Lord, save my mother!" There was written in pencil at the foot of the page, "Read also May 25th." And she turned to it. It was Christ's prayer in the Garden: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." And beneath it Keble's beautiful verse:

"O Lord, my God, do Thou Thy holy will,
I will lie still;
I will not stir, lest I forsake Thine arm,
And break the charm
Which lulls me, clinging to my Father's breast,
In perfect rest."

And then there were some strong and helpful words by Butler, by Faber, and by Francis de Sales. There was a pencil line drawn under Francis de Sales's: "Lord, Thy will be done, in father, mother, child; in everything and everywhere." Lois read them with eyes that could hardly see. She did not want to be resigned. She was not ready to say, "Thy will be done," but nevertheless, a little peace, a little rest, had come with the reading. She closed the book with a sigh and a prayer, this time for herself—"Lord, help me."

The porter came in to ask her if she would go out to supper. He had been assiduous in his attentions all the afternoon, and it flashed across Lois's mind that perhaps Mr. Hamilton had given him reason to be. She did not want to go into the dining car; supper alone in there would be a dreary thing; but she remembered that she was to try to keep up her strength, to be ready for whatever might be before her, and kind Mrs. Scranton had put up a little luncheon for her, and she would try to eat some of it, and some of Mr. Hamilton's fruit. She got out her little box, and the porter, seeing her preparations, bustled up with a table for her and put a cloth

over it. He tried to insist on her having a cup of tea or coffee, and when she declined both he went away and returned with a glass of milk, into which he must have emptied the cream-jug; for it was a very different looking beverage from the ordinary buffet milk. She thanked him, and was about to pay him for it, when to her astonishment, he refused to receive it.

"With the compliments of the porter, miss," he said, with shining teeth.

Her first instinct was to insist on payment, but his smile and bow had so much of friendliness in it, that somehow it touched her lonely heart, and knowing that he probably had been already well paid, she thanked him again and accepted it.

She found her fruit very refreshing, and it made her think again of Mr. Hamilton and all his kindness, and as the twilight came on, and she saw the stars come out that she knew were shining over Norwood and St. Mark's, "and Houghton," she added in her thoughts blushingly, it seemed to give her a better idea of the All-Father, looking down on His children in all those places, never forgetting or losing sight of one of them, ready to help in every time of trouble.

She had her berth made up early. It would be a comfort, she thought, to be shut in, and it would seem to put an end at last to that interminable afternoon. She did not expect to sleep, and yet, no sooner had she put her head on the pillow than utter weariness overcame her, and though she woke frequently through the night, the motion of the car always lulled her to sleep again. She would have been glad if she could only have stayed in her berth all the way to St. Mark's, in that semi-unconscious state, soothed by the rocking of the car to a kind of insensibility. But day came, and finally she could lie there no longer. She knew by the noises in the car that the passengers were all up, and she herself was wide awake, and conscious that she had passed in the night to a warmer clime; for the sun, even through her drawn blind, was beating hotly down on her pillow. That was a long and terrible day to her. In looking back on it, she often wondered how she lived through it; but it was over at last, and she knew by the converging railroads and the trains rushing from all directions over the wild prairies toward one central point, that they were nearing St. Mark's. Her heart began to beat so fast, it almost suffocated

her. A sick feeling of apprehension made her feel faint. She wished now that she had sent word that she was coming, that there might be some one at the station to meet her. She had not done so on account of an indefinable feeling that it would be better for her mother not to be expecting her at any certain time, and waiting for the moments to pass. They were on the approach to the bridge now. She could see the familiar spires across the river, and the low, dun-colored cloud that always hung over the city. Then the transfer agent came and took her checks and gave her a ticket for her carriage. In a few moments they would be in the St. Mark's station. The porter came and gathered up her traps. She was so faint and white that he noticed it, and with wonderful thoughtfulness in a porter, brought her a glass of water. She drank a little of it and felt better. The train stopped, and the porter, contrary to all traditions, carried her traps to the very door of the carriage. Mr. Hamilton's tip must have been a generous one. The windows of the carriage were open, and the evening air revived her a little, as they rolled swiftly along over the asphalt into the western part of the city. They stopped in front of Dr.

Colton's door. One quick glance told Lois that the awful thing she had so dreaded might meet her eyes on the door was not there. With a sudden lifting of the heart, she sprang from the carriage and rang the bell softly. Nora answered the ring, and at the sight of Lois, white and eager, uttered a shriek that brought Dr. Colton and Mabel hurrying from the dining-room where they were at dinner. Mabel rushed upon her, and between joy and pity, excitement and sympathy, burst into tears as she hugged her and kissed her. Lois was greatly alarmed, and her face, already white, turned so deadly pale that Dr. Colton seeing it took her hand, and drawing her away from Mabel, said:

"Lois, my child, we are very glad to see you, and you must not let Mabel frighten you. She is hysterical with unexpected joy."

Lois's faltering lips formed, but could not utter the word, "mamma!"

"I think she is doing just as well as we could hope. You must come and sit down, my dear, and have a little dinner before you will be fit to see her." And the doctor led her into the dining-room, and tried to take off her hat and cloak.

But as he was clumsily attempting to discharge those hospitable duties Mrs. Colton came in from the sick-room, and as she deftly relieved the doctor of his awkward task, her greeting to Lois was warm and tender.

"She is sleeping, Lois," she said, "as she is most of the time, and you must not be frightened if she does not know you. She does not always know her friends."

"I think, then, if she sleeping," said Dr. Colton, "it is a very good time for Lois to go in. She can sit down by the bedside, and when her mother wakes her glance will fall naturally upon her, and perhaps it will not be so great a shock. But, remember, Lois, you must be perfectly quiet and controlled, or I will not answer for the consequences. And you cannot go until you have eaten something."

Lois could not eat, but she drained, almost at a swallow, the cup of coffee Mabel brought her, as if she were taking a dose of medicine. With what trembling footsteps Lois mounted the stairs and entered that hushed room and with what an agony of spirit she saw the white form on the white bed, lying so still it seemed to Lois she must be already dead! She sat down in the

chair near the bed the doctor motioned toward, and he himself sat not far away. He wanted to be present at the meeting, for he could not but fear the shock. The trained nurse had stolen from the room and gone to dinner as they entered, and there they sat silent for a long time. It seemed to Lois that she sat for years, with her eyes never for one moment removed from that white face, so sadly and strangely like, and yet unlike, her idolized mother. But at last there was a little movement. She seemed to ask for something, and Lois bent her ear to listen, and heard her own name breathed. She took hold of the hot, wasted hand gently, and said in clear, soft tones, "What is it, mamma? I am here."

The doctor started up, trembling. He had not expected Lois to speak to her mother. They had not told her quite all, that for two days now she had known no one; she was either sunk in stupor, or in the mild ravings of delirium. Would that loved voice pierce the poor, benumbed brain, and if it did, what would be the result? He held his breath.

Slowly the heavy eyelids lifted, and the lusterless eyes fell full on Lois bending over her. The vacant stare changed slowly, so slowly, to the

doctor and Lois watching breathlessly. The eyes seemed to be gathering intelligence as they gazed wistfully at Lois; then the dull cloud came over them again. They were fast slipping back into vacancy.

The doctor attempted to make a sign to Lois not to try to bring her back; it was better to wait until she returned without effort to consciousness. That delicate balance-wheel of the reason must not be touched by rude hands, lest it forever lose its equilibrium. But Lois did not see him nor hear him. Her whole soul was in that look, trying to draw her mother back to life and reason. When she saw her slipping away again into that dark realm where she could not reach her, she uttered one low cry, "mamma!"

Instantly the eyes that were fast closing lifted. A rapturous light that was almost dazzling sprang into them.

"Lois!" she cried, and raised her arms to clasp her darling.

Lois's head was on her mother's breast; her mother's arms were about her. Not another word had either one uttered; they both lay perfectly still. Then the doctor, who was in an agony of fear for his patient, came forward.

He spoke to her as if she had never been anything but rational.

"Mrs. Darcy, you must let Lois go now. She is tired with her long journey. She will come back presently when she has had something to eat, and sit beside you until bedtime. Lois, my child, you must go down-stairs and get some dinner. In fifteen minutes you may return, but not before."

Mrs. Darcy whispered "Go," and loosened her clasp.

Lois rose, white but smiling, "I will be back in a little while, mamma darling."

And she kissed her and hurried from the room. It had been almost more than Lois could stand, and the doctor had feared an irrepressible outburst, and so he had sent her away.

In the hall she met Mrs. Colton, and fell into her arms, shaking from head to foot with long sobs. Mrs. Colton took her quickly to her own room, and there, when she had at last soothed her, and persuaded her, for her mother's sake, to eat a little, the doctor came in, wiping his brow with his handkerchief.

"It is the most astonishing thing I have ever known, Lois, I should have said that your

method of meeting your mother quietly and naturally would have killed her. I was never so frightened in my life, as when I heard you speak to her; and when she was going back to unconsciousness, and you recalled her with that heart-rending 'mamma,' I said 'It is all over, Lois has killed her mother.' But, my dear, I believe you have saved her. She is certainly no worse, and I almost think she is quieter, and her sleep more natural. You are what she needed, Lois, and she was dying with longing for you."

Yet life seemed to hang by a slender thread for many days. There was still the stupor, still the delirium, and she did not again apparently recognize Lois. But if Lois sat beside her and held her hand, she was always quiet and seemed to sleep. Lois had sent a little note to Dr. Seton, enclosing a check and her thanks, the day after her arrival; and another short one to Margaret, and one to Miss Belden; and she had received kind, loving, sympathetic responses from all three. She had also written a very brief one to Mr. Hamilton. It began formally "My dear Mr. Hamilton," and was signed "Yours sincerely, Lois Darcy," and there were only three lines besides:

"I arrived safely and on time. My mother is very ill. Pray for us both."

But to Mr. Hamilton every letter was golden; and that she had asked him to pray for them was the most sacred trust she could have reposed in him. It made him a better man than he had ever been before. Night and morning and many times during the day, he uttered a fervent prayer for the life of the one and the peace of the other. Lois received his answer very speedily, full of kind, comforting words, and many expressions of tender regard for her mother. He evidently did not expect her to reply, but he asked her to let him know when her mother was better. No one could be more anxious than he.

Those were long, long days to Lois, and between hope and fear her courage and strength were almost failing. Not yet had she learned to say "Thy will be done." Not yet could she pray any farther than "Lord, save my mother!" On the morning of the 25th she was up early. It was a perfect May morning. The birds in the cottonwoods and sweet gums were singing a jubilee, and the morning air, coming through her open windows, was full of the odors of roses

and honeysuckle. She opened her little book, she read it every morning now, and behold it was the 25th, and she had come again upon the lesson: "Thy will be done." For the first time she fully realized how obstinately she was praying, "My will be done." Her heart was melted. She sank upon her knees, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt!" When at last she rose, she had learned the lesson: "Lord, Thy will be done in father, mother, child; in everything and everywhere."

She went down-stairs to her mother's room with a peace in her heart she had never quite known before. Dr. Colton was alone there, and he called her aside.

"Lois," he said, "I think there is a great change at hand, and you must have courage to meet it, whatever it may be. I believe it will be a change for the better. I want you to go down-stairs and get some breakfast immediately. Don't wait for the rest of us; and then come back and take your accustomed seat by your mother's side. When she wakes from this sleep I want you to be the first thing she sees. Now go."

"Must I go? I do not need any breakfast."

"Yes, you must, and you must eat all you possibly can."

Lois hurried away, and in ten minutes she was back, and took her seat praying, oh, how fervently: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." It was nearly an hour before her mother moved; then she opened her eyes slowly, and they fell on Lois.

"Lois, darling, when did you come?" she said in a weak voice, but in a perfectly natural tone.

This was her real mother. The other mother who had seemed to recognize her, she knew now, as she felt then, was still wandering in cloud-land, even when she seemed to know her; but there was no mistaking the sweet, familiar smile and dear tones this time. A great wave of thankfulness rushed over Lois, as she knelt by her mother, and kissed her hand and talked to her in a low, cheerful voice, until the doctor, who had to turn away to the window to hide his own emotion, said they had talked long enough.

"Mrs. Darcy must be quiet, Lois; run away now, and in two hours you may come back."

Long, sweet days of convalescence followed, when every day a little change for the better was

apparent, until there came a time when Mrs. Darcy could sit up in her easy chair, and Lois, sitting at her feet, as of old, told her all about the concert, and about Mr. Hamilton coming with her as far as St. Albans, and about everything that had happened in Norwood.

When her mother was really better, she had written Mr. Hamilton another note, telling him only that; and again there had come a prompt and lengthy reply, full of his delight and messages to her mother, and a little Gale and Houghton gossip.

And then, by the last of June, Dr. Colton said all that Mrs. Darcy needed now was complete change of air and scene, and as her physician he recommended a European trip. A sea voyage would do more for her than all his medicines; and Lois, the careful one, who never liked to have her mother touch her capital, was now more than willing that she should make great inroads into it, if it would only bring back the roses and the strength that still lingered.

CHAPTER XXII

IN BRIGHTER CLIMES

It was late in August. For two months they had been wandering slowly, aimlessly, and delightfully through England and Switzerland. They were sitting in the beautiful gardens of the Hotel Beaurivage at Ouchy, watching the boats with their lateen sails—the first Lois had ever seen. They looked to her like great sea-gulls resting lightly on the water, with wings raised, ready at any moment to soar away into the azure above them, that was hardly more limpid and exquisite in tint than the azure below.

It was while they were sitting there that Mrs. Darcy was seized with a great longing to visit a *pension* on Mount Pilatus, kept by two Swiss dames, the neatest and nicest and kindest of spinsters, where she had spent some happy days when she was a girl. So Lois had written to find out if they were still in the land of the living and still keeping a *pension*, and had directed the answer to be sent to Interlachen. They found

it awaiting them there. "The Mesdemoiselles de Bremond were still in the same spot, and would be most happy to welcome Madame Darcy, whom they remembered well, and her no doubt charming daughter."

So, as soon as they could tear themselves away from the mystic spell the Jungfrau was fast weaving about them, they had crossed the Brunig Pass, and taking the little steamer from Alpnach Gestad, sailed over the deep, cold, blue waters of the mountain-girded lake to Hergiswyl, at the foot of Mount Pilatus. There they had found the friendliest welcome awaiting them from the two ladies, now fast growing old, but still able to keep the neatest and most thoroughly comfortable house Mrs. Darcy and Lois had found anywhere, and they determined to spend the remainder of the summer there, making little excursions to Lucerne, the Rigi, Tell's Chapel, in whatever direction they might feel like going; but keeping their headquarters at the de Bremond *pension*.

It was the day after their arrival; they were sitting in some garden chairs, on a kind of grassy plateau, well shaded from the afternoon sun, and commanding a magnificent view of the lake and its encircling mountains. Opposite

them, almost as if they could touch it with their hand, lay Lucerne, its great hotels fronting the water, more picturesque from a distance than at closer range. A little lower down was the Rigi, and they could see a train climbing its steep sides, at what looked, from their point of view, a most perilous angle. Further down they could see the arms into which the lake divided, and the frowning mountains that gathered close about them. As they sat there, enjoying it so thoroughly that Mrs. Darcy said she did not believe she cared for any better way to see the lake than from their own little plot of garden, a maid in a picturesque Swiss costume brought them two letters—one for Mrs. Darcy and one for Lois.

"Who is yours from, mamma?" Lois said, when she had read hers.

"From Mrs. Harding," said her mother, looking up with a smile. "She says we can have our old rooms on Elm Street."

"Why, mamma, I did not know you had written to her."

"Yes, dear, a month ago. This is forwarded from Geneva."

"And are you sure, mamma, you want to go there?"

"Very sure, darling; and I don't think we will make any mistakes this time."

Lois was silent a moment. "Mamma," she said at last, "do you know I believe we misunderstood each other last winter? I thought you were homesick and longing for St. Mark's, and it almost broke my heart to think you could get along without me more easily than you could without your friends at home. And now I think that very likely you were doing it all for me, thinking I would be happier on the campus among the girls."

A great and beautiful light came into Mrs. Darcy's eyes.

"O Lois darling! we did misunderstand. It was the idea that you could be happy without me, perhaps happier than with me, that almost killed me."

"O mamma! mamma!" and Lois seized her mother's hand and pressed it fondly. It was the only caress she could indulge in in that open garden. "How could we have been so mistaken? How could I distrust you, the dearest, most unselfish mother in the world? And how could you doubt your Lois?"

They sat silent a few minutes, both feeling that

a little mist had cleared away between them, and at last they were perfectly happy.

"Who is your letter from, Lois?" Mrs. Darcy asked, suddenly.

"From Mr. Hamilton," said Lois, with a bright blush. "He says he has been in England for some time with the Houghton Glee Club. He inquired where we were, at the London address I gave him, and they told him, and he is coming to see us very soon. But you can read his letter." And she handed it to her mother, and Mrs. Darcy read it.

It was brief, and a model of propriety, but signed, "Ever faithfully yours, Jack Hamilton."

"I am glad he is coming," Mrs. Darcy said, and there was a little flush on her face, too. "But, Lois," as she looked at the date, "this must have been delayed somewhere. I should not wonder if he would be here very soon."

Just then a little steamer put out from Lucerne for Hergiswyl. They watched it with interest come puffing across the lake, crowded with passengers. From where they sat, they could distinguish them quite well. There were some soldiers in brilliant regimentals, a queer old market-woman with her baskets, and, in the

very bow of the boat was a tall man with a field-glass, apparently looking at them.

"Lois," said her mother, in sudden excitement, "I believe that is Mr. Hamilton."

"Do you think so? It does look like him," said Lois. "If I were sure, I would wave my handkerchief."

The boat was coming up to the wharf now, and they could see more distinctly. He was putting away his glass, preparatory to getting off.

"O mamma! I am sure it is he! Shall I wave?"

"I think you may; it certainly cannot do any harm."

And Lois waved her handkerchief, and there was no mistaking the way the hat came off in return, with a wide, graceful flourish. Lois could even recognize the fair hair, long and wavy—regular foot-ball hair—and she almost fancied she could see the same look in the smiling blue eyes that she had seen in them as he stood on the St. Albans platform, more than three months before, and waved her good-bye.

* * * * * * * * *

Mr. Hamilton had been with them a week, and that period marked a wonderful improve-

ment in Mrs. Darcy. The pale, thin cheeks were rounded and rosy, her eyes had their old-time brightness, her spirits had recovered their old tone, and she was ready for any little expedition either Lois or Mr. Hamilton proposed. The night before they had spent on the Rigi, and they had the unusual good fortune to see an unclouded sunrise. This very afternoon Mr. Hamilton had rowed them over to Lucerne, to see Thorwaldsen's Lion and to hear the grand organ concert, and now she was sitting out in the warm moonlight with Mr. Hamilton, feeling perfectly fresh and unfatigued, and quite ready for any number of expeditions on the morrow. Whether it was Mr. Hamilton's strong and cheery presence or the perfect understanding which she and Lois had reached at last, or both, certain it was that the long-delayed health had returned with a rush, and she could no longer, as she said, make even the slightest pretense of being an invalid.

"I don't know which of you I am the most jealous of," remarked Lois, stepping out upon the piazza, "I think it is very unkind of mamma to monopolize the only young man in the *pension*, and I think it is equally un-

kind of you, Mr. Hamilton, to win my mother's confidence away from me. I am certainly jealous of you both."

"She has no reason to be; has she, Mrs. Darcy?" he said. And then to Lois, "The only young man in the *pension* has your mother's permission to take you for a moonlight row on those sparkling blue waters," with a wave of his hand toward the lake below. "Will you go?"

Mrs. Darcy watched them as they went down the steep path toward the landing, talking merrily together, for Lois had lost all feeling of restraint with him now. They disappeared from sight among the shadows around the landing, but in a few minutes the little skiff shot out into the strong moonlight, and Lois waved her handkerchief as a signal that she could see her mother. Mrs. Darcy waved hers in return, and then fell to musing on her darling's future, and the smiles that hovered round her mouth and deepened in her eyes showed that her thoughts were happy, hopeful ones.

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